

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Vayigash

Genesis 44:18-47:27

Torah Reading for Week of December 8-14, 2002

The 22-year contest between Joseph and his brothers is now approaching its climax: Judah approaches Joseph — whom he knows only as Tzaphnat Paaneach, viceroy of Egypt — to plead, argue and threaten for the release of Benjamin. The viceroy's magic goblet had been discovered in Benjamin's sack; "He shall be my slave," declared the Egyptian ruler in the closing verse of last week's Parshah, "and you go up in peace to your father."

But the brothers won't go in peace. Judah, their spokesman and leader, and the one who assumed personal responsibility to Jacob for Benjamin's safe return, pleads: "How shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me?" Benjamin is the only surviving child of our father's most beloved wife, his older brother having disappeared many years ago; our father's very life is bound with Benjamin's life. "When he sees that the lad is not with us, he will die; and your servants shall bring down the white head of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave."

"I beg you," concludes Judah, "let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brothers... Lest I see the evil that shall befall my father."

Reunion

And Joseph could not restrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, "Order every man to go out from me." And no man stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

Commentary

AND JUDAH APPROACHED HIM... (GENESIS 44:18)

Said Rabbi Judah: The verb "he approached" (*vayigash*) implies an approach to battle, as in the verse (II Samuel 10:13), "So Joab and the people that were with him approached unto battle."

Rabbi Nechemiah said: The verb "he approached" implies a coming near for conciliation, as in the verse (Joshua 14:6), "Then the children of Judah approached Joshua."

The Sages said: It implies coming near for prayer, as in the verse (I Kings, 18:36), "And it came to pass at the time of the evening offering, that Elijah the prophet approached..."

Rabbi Eleazar combined all these views: Judah approached Joseph for all three, saying: If it be war, I approach for war; if it be conciliation, I approach for conciliation; if it be for entreaty, I approach to entreat.

(Midrash Rabbah)

YOUR SERVANT OUR FATHER (44:24, ET AL)

Ten times Joseph heard his brothers refer to his father as "your servant" and he did not protest. Because of this, his life was shortened by ten years. (Joseph lived 110 years.)

(Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 39)

"LET YOUR SERVANT REMAIN INSTEAD OF THE LAD AS A SLAVE TO MY LORD."
(44:33)

[Said Judah to Joseph:] I am more useful than him in every regard: in strength, as a warrior, or as a servant.

(Rashi)

G-d deals with man measure for measure: because Judah had sold Joseph into slavery, he was now compelled to offer himself to Joseph as a slave.

(Abarbanel)

AND JOSEPH COULD NOT RESTRAIN HIMSELF (45:1)

The confrontation between Joseph and Judah — to what was this comparable? To an ox who was running about and all animals were fleeing from it, for it was kicking the one and butting the other, until the lion appeared, and the ox retreated. (In Genesis 49, the sons of Jacob are compared to different animals—Naphtali is a gazelle, Dan a serpent, Benjamin a wolf, etc.; Joseph is likened to an ox, and Judah, to a lion).

(Midrash Tanchuma)

Regarding the encounter between Judah and Joseph it is said: "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out" (Proverbs 20:5). This may be compared to a deep well full of cold and excellent water, yet none could drink of it. Then came one who tied cord to cord and thread to thread, drew up its water and drank, whereupon all drew water thus and drank thereof. In the same way Judah did not cease from answering Joseph word for word until he penetrated to his very heart.

(Midrash Rabbah)

AND HE CRIED, "ORDER EVERY MAN TO GO OUT FROM ME." AND NO MAN STOOD WITH HIM WHILE JOSEPH MADE HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS BROTHERS (45:1)

Rabbi Chama bar Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Samuel bar Nachmani discussed this. Rabbi Chama said: Joseph did not act prudently, for had one of them kicked him, he would have died on the spot. Rabbi Samuel said: He acted rightly and prudently. He knew the righteousness of his brethren and reasoned: Heaven forbid! My brothers are not to be suspected of bloodshed.

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And he wept aloud; and Egypt heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard.

And Joseph said to his brothers: "I am Joseph; is my father still alive?" And his brothers could not answer him, for they were terrified before him.

And Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, I entreat you." And they came near. And he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt."

The brothers are beside themselves with shame and remorse, and it is Joseph who comforts them. "It was not you who sent me here," he says to them, "but G-d." It has all been ordained from Above: because you sold me into slavery, we will all be saved from the hunger which has

stricken the entire region these last two years, and which is destined to continue for another five.

"Hasten, and go up to my father, and say to him: Thus says your son Joseph: G-d has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me, do not delay... and you shall be near me...and there will I sustain you."

Pharaoh sends wagons to bring Jacob and his entire family to Egypt, and declares: "The bounty of the entire land of Egypt is yours."

The Divine Promise

And they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father, and told him, saying: "Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt." And his heart fainted, for he believed them not.

And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them. And when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

And Israel said: "It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive; I will go and see him before I die."

Commentary*(Midrash Rabbah)*

AND HIS BROTHERS COULD NOT ANSWER HIM, FOR THEY WERE TERRIFIED BEFORE HIM (45:3)

When Rabbi Eleazar would come to this verse, he would weep: "Now if the rebuke of flesh and blood be such, how much more so the rebuke of the Holy One, blessed be He!"

(Talmud, Chagigah 4b)

BEHOLD, YOUR EYES SEE... THAT IT IS MY MOUTH THAT SPEAKS TO YOU (45:12)

He showed them that he was circumcised, and that he speaks the Holy Tongue.

(Rashi)

AND [JACOB'S] HEART FAINTED, FOR HE BELIEVED THEM NOT (45:26)

Such is the liar's fate: even when he speaks the truth he is not believed. At first the sons of Jacob lied to their father when they dipped Joseph's coat in the blood of a goat, and he believed them; but then when they told him the truth, he did not believe them.

(Avot d'Rabbi Nathan, ch. 30)

AND THEY TOLD [JACOB] ALL THE WORDS OF JOSEPH... AND WHEN HE SAW THE WAGONS WHICH JOSEPH HAD SENT TO CARRY HIM, THE SPIRIT OF JACOB THEIR FATHER WAS REVIVED (45:27)

Joseph gave his brothers a sign to relay to their father: that at the time that Joseph had parted from Jacob, they had been studying the laws of *Eglah Arufah* ("The Beheaded Heifer," Deuteronomy 21). Thus, although it was Pharaoh who had sent the wagons, the verse says, "And when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent" — for the "wagons" (*agalot*) of which the verse speaks is a reference to the *Eglah Arufah*.

(Rashi)

When Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers, he accompanied him on the way. Said Joseph: "Father, turn back, so that I should not be punished for troubling you." Said Jacob to him: "My son, in this very matter my descendants will blunder, when they do not arrange a proper escort for a traveler and he is killed, and they will have to bring an *Eglah Arufah* and proclaim: 'Our hand did not spill this blood.'"

(Jerusalem Talmud)

The principle behind the law of *Eglah Arufah* is that a person is responsible also for what occurs outside of his domain — outside of the areas where he is fully in control. When a murdered traveler is found "out in the field," the elders of the nearest city must go out there and bring the *Eglah Arufah* to atone for the crime, although it occurred outside of their jurisdiction; for it was nevertheless their responsibility to send the traveler off with adequate provision and protection.

This is the deeper significance of the message which Joseph sent to Jacob. Father, he was saying, I have not forgotten the law of *Eglah Arufah*. I have been exiled from the sacred environment of your home, but I have not allowed my soul to travel to the spiritual no-man's-land of Egypt without provision; I have not abandoned it to a spiritual death with the justification that "This is outside of my element; I have no way of dealing with this."

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On the way to Egypt, at the oasis of Be'er Sheba, G-d appears to Jacob. "I am G-d, the G-d of your father; fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt; and I will also surely bring you up again."

The Seventy Souls

And these are the names of the children of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons...

And the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Karmi.

And the sons of Shimon: Yemu'el, Yamin, Ohad, Yachin, and Zohar; and Shaul the son of the Canaanite woman.

And the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kehat, and Merari.

And the sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, and Peretz and Zerah; but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Peretz were Hezron and Hamul.

And the sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvvah, Yov and Shimron.

And the sons of Zebulum: Sered, Elon and Yachle'el...

[Jacob's] daughter Dinah...

And the sons of Gad: Zifyon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri,

Commentary

(Talmud, Megillah 29a)

After 22 years of slavery, imprisonment and political power in the most depraved society on the face of the earth, I am the same Joseph who left your home on the day that we studied the laws of *Eglah Arufah*.

This was the message that "revived the spirit of Jacob their father."

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

AND ISRAEL TOOK HIS JOURNEY WITH ALL THAT HE HAD, AND CAME TO BE'ER-SHEBA (46:1)

Why did he go there? Said Rabbi Nachman: He went to cut down the cedars which his grandfather Abraham had planted in Be'er-Sheba. These cedars were then taken along when the Children of Israel left Egypt, and were used for the construction of the Sanctuary in the desert.

(Midrash Rabbah)

For all the years that the children of Israel were in Egypt, Jacob's cedars served as a link to their past and a promise of their future. "This is not your home," the growing trees said. "You, like us, hail from a loftier, holier place. And soon you will leave this depraved land, to be reclaimed by G-d as His people. You will then uproot us from this foreign land and carry us triumphantly to Sinai, where you will construct out of us a dwelling for the Divine presence in your midst."

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

"I WILL GO DOWN WITH YOU INTO EGYPT; AND I WILL ALSO SURELY BRING YOU UP AGAIN" (46:4)

Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of G-d! To every place to which they were exiled, the Divine Presence went with them. They were exiled to Egypt and the Divine Presence was with them; they were exiled to Babylon, and the Divine Presence was with them; and when they will be redeemed in the future, the Divine Presence will be with them.

AND SERACH THEIR SISTER (46:17)

When Jacob's sons returned from Egypt with the news that Joseph is alive, they said: If we tell him straightaway, his soul will fly from his body. So they told Serach to play on her harp and sing, "Joseph lives, Joseph lives, and he is the ruler of Egypt," so that he should absorb the message slowly.

Said Jacob to her: "The mouth that informed me that Joseph lives shall not taste death." Serach was among those who came out of Egypt and among those who entered the Land; She was the "wise woman" who handed over Sheva ben Bichri to Joab (II Samuel 20); in the end, she entered paradise alive.

(Sefer HaYashar; Tzror HaMor)

AND THE SONS OF BENJAMIN: BELA, BECHER, ASHBEL, GERA, NA'AMAN, ACHI, ROSH, MUPPIM, CHUPPIM AND ARD (46:21)

When Benjamin was brought before Joseph, Joseph questioned him: "Have you a brother?"

"I had a brother, but I do not know where he has gone."

"Have you a wife?"

"I have a wife and ten sons."

"What are their names?"

"I named them all after my brother," said Benjamin. "*Bela* — he was swallowed up from me; *Becher* — he was his mother's firstborn; *Ashbel* — he was taken away captive; *Gera* — he became a stranger in a strange country; *Naaman* — his deeds were seemly and pleasant; *Achi* — he was my brother; *Rosh* — he was my superior; *Muppim* — he was exceedingly beautiful; *Chuppim* — I did not see his *chupah* (marriage canopy) and he

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Arodi and Ar'eli.

And the sons of Asher: Yimnah, Yishvah, Yishvi, Beri'ah, and Serach their sister. And the sons of Beri'ah were Hever and Malki'el...

And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born

Menasseh and Ephraim...

And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Na'aman, Achi, Rosh, Muppim, Chuppim, and Ard...

And the sons of Dan: Hushim.

And the sons of Naftali: Yachze'el, Guni, Yezer, and Shillem....

All the souls of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.

The Jews in Egypt

Jacob sends Judah ahead to Egypt, "to show the way before him."

And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen...

And he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good

Commentary

did not see mine; Ard — he was like a rose-bloom."

(Midrash Rabbah)

ALL THE SOULS OF THE HOUSE OF JACOB WHO CAME INTO EGYPT WERE SEVENTY (46:27)

But if you count them, you find only sixty-nine; the seventieth is Jocheved the daughter of Levi, who was born between the boundary walls as they entered Egypt.

(Talmud, Bava Batra 123a)

When they reached the border of Egypt, they added up to sixty-six; together with Joseph and his two sons, they were one less than seventy. What did G-d do? He entered into the count with them, in fulfillment of what is written, "I will go down with you into Egypt."

(Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 39)

AND HE SENT JUDAH BEFORE HIM TO JOSEPH, TO SHOW THE WAY BEFORE HIM TO GOSHEN (46:28)

The word *lehorot* ("to show the way") also means, "to teach"; Jacob sent Judah to prepare a *beit midrash* (house of study) for him there where he would teach Torah and where the sons of Jacob would read the Torah.

(Midrash Rabbah; Rashi)

AND JOSEPH MADE READY HIS CHARIOT, AND WENT UP TO MEET ISRAEL HIS FATHER... AND HE FELL ON HIS NECK, AND WEPT ON HIS NECK (46:29)

But Jacob did not embrace Joseph and did not kiss him; our sages tell us that he was reading the *Shema*.

(Rashi)

Why did Jacob choose that particular moment to read the *Shema*? Because Jacob knew that never in his life would his love be aroused as it was at that moment, the moment of reunion with his most beloved son after twenty-two years of anguish and loss. So he chose to utilize this tremendous welling of emotion to serve His Creator, channeling it to fuel his love for G-d.

(The Chassidic Masters)

AND PHARAOH SAID TO JACOB, "HOW MANY ARE THE YEARS OF YOUR LIFE?" (47:8)

Og (the King of Bashan) was there. So they said to him: "Did you not say that Abraham is a sterile mule who cannot beget children? Here is his grandson with seventy descendants!" Said Og: "This is Abraham himself." He thought that Jacob was Abraham, since Jacob's face was identical to Abraham's. Thus Pharaoh began asking Jacob questions, saying to him: "How many are the years of your life?"

(Midrash Rabbah)

AND JACOB SAID TO PHARAOH: "THE DAYS OF THE YEARS OF MY SOJOURNINGS A HUNDRED AND THIRTY YEARS; FEW AND BAD HAVE THE DAYS OF THE YEARS OF MY LIFE BEEN, AND THEY HAVE NOT ATTAINED TO THE DAYS OF THE YEARS OF THE LIVES OF MY FATHERS" (47:9)

Most of us are satisfied with reasonable aspirations: develop your mind, make ends meet, live in peace with your neighbors. But then there are those special individuals who derive no satisfaction from personal achievements. For it is total, universal perfection they seek — as long as they inhabit a world where evil and want still exist, they perceive their own selves as deficient and wanting..

Such a man was Jacob. Of the three founding fathers of the Jewish nation, only Jacob's names ("Jacob" and "Israel") are synonymous with "The Jewish People." For Jacob lived not an individual's life. His earthly life and deeds were but the beginnings of the 35-century mission of Israel to perfect G-d's creation.

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while. And Israel said to Joseph: "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive."

Pharaoh grants Jacob's family the country of Goshen, a place suitable for their vocation as shepherds. Joseph presents his father and brothers to Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the years of your life?"

And Jacob said to Pharaoh: "The days of the years of my sojournings are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,

and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojournings."

And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

Joseph gathers the wealth of Egypt and the surrounding countries, as all the money and valuables are expended in the purchase of food during the famine. Joseph then "nationalizes" all the land in Egypt, transferring its population and decreeing that a fifth of its produce must be given to Pharaoh in return for its use; only the priests are exempted from this tax.

And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt in the country of Goshen; and they took possession of it, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

Commentary

So Jacob, though he had already surpassed the Divinely-ordained human lifespan of "one hundred and twenty years," describes his 130 achievement-filled years as "few and bad." Though formidable in number, they are wanting in content, for their efforts still await realization. "They have not attained the days of the lives of my fathers," said Jacob. My grandfather Abraham "grew old, he came with his days" — at the close of his life his days were full, ripe with the fruit of his labors. Isaac, too, lived a fulfilled life, the life of a "perfect offering." But unlike my fathers, who closed a cycle of achievement in their physical lifetimes, mine is but an opening chapter in a process that spans history..

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

AND JACOB BLESSED PHARAOH (47:10)

He blessed him that the Nile should rise at his feet and water the land; thus the famine ended after two years (instead of seven).

(Midrash Tanchuma; Rashi)

JOSEPH SAID TO THE PEOPLE, BEHOLD, I HAVE BOUGHT YOU THIS DAY AND YOUR LAND FOR PHARAOH; BEHOLD, HERE IS SEED FOR YOU, AND YOU SHALL SOW THE LAND (47:23)

Until Jacob came down to Egypt, there was famine in the land; after Jacob came, what is written? "Behold, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land."

(Tosefta, Sotah ch. 10)

AND ISRAEL DWELT IN THE LAND OF EGYPT IN THE COUNTRY OF GOSHEN; AND THEY TOOK POSSESSION OF IT (47:27)

The Hebrew word *vayei'achazu* ("and they took possession of it") literally means "and they took hold of it," but also translates, "and they were held

by it." Both interpretations are cited by our sages: Rashi translates *vayei'achazu* as related to the word *achuzah*, "land holding" and "homestead"; the Midrash interprets it to imply that, "The land held them and grasped them... like a man who is forcefully held."

This duality defines the Jew's attitude toward *galut* (exile). On the one hand, we know that no matter how hospitable our host-country may be, and no matter how we may flourish, materially and spiritually, on foreign soil, *galut* is a prison in that it dims our spiritual vision, hinders our national mission and compromises our connection with G-d. For only as a nation dwelling on our land with the Holy Temple as the Divine abode in our midst can we perceive the Divine presence in the world, fully realize our role as "a light unto the nations," and fully implement all the mitzvot of the Torah—the lifeblood of our relationship with G-d.

But we also know that we are in *galut* for a purpose. We know that we have been dispersed throughout the world in order to reach and influence the whole of humanity. We know that it is only through the wanderings and tribulations of *galut* that we access and redeem the "sparks of holiness" — the pinpoints of Divine potential which lie scattered in the most forsaken corners of the globe..

So *Galut* is an *achuzah* in both senses of the word: a "holding" to develop and a "holding pen" we must perpetually seek to escape.

Indeed, it can only be the one if it is also the other. If we relate to *galut* solely as a prison, we will fail to properly utilize the tremendous opportunities it holds. But if we grow comfortable in this alien environment, we risk becoming part of it; and if we become part of the *galut* reality, G-d forbid, we could no more succeed in our efforts to develop and elevate it than the person who tries to lift himself up by pulling upwards on the hairs atop his own head.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

FROM THE CHASSIDIC MASTERS

THE AWESOME PLOT

The Midrash states that the entire saga of Joseph and his brothers the brothers' seemingly uncontrollable jealousy of him; his sale, imprisonment and rise to power; their eventual confrontation and rapprochement was all an "awesome plot" devised by G-d to bring Jacob and his family to Egypt.

When Jacob sent Joseph to go check up on his brothers a mission from which Joseph did not return and was lost to his father for the next 22 years, the Torah describes it thus: "And he sent him from the valley (literally, 'the depth') of Hebron, and he came to Shechem." Where is "the valley of Hebron"? ask our sages. Hebron sits on the high ground! But the meaning of the phrase, they explain, is allegorical: Joseph was dispatched on his way from "the depth of Hebron" — from the depths of the Divine plan that had been confided to Abraham, the patriarch buried in the Cave of Machpeila in Hebron.

At the "covenant Between the Pieces," Abraham had been given a choice by G-d: Shall your children suffer *galut* (exile) or *gehenah* (hell)? Abraham chose *galut*, thus sending Joseph on the road to Egypt, to be followed by the rest of his family, so that the Children of Israel should experience four generations of exile and slavery before proceeding to Mount Sinai to receive their mandate as G-d's chosen people.

But why did it have to be so complicated? Was there no other way to get Israel and family to Egypt? The Midrash offers the following parable in explanation:

This is comparable to a cow upon whom it was desired to place a yoke, but the cow was withholding her neck from the yoke. What did they do? They took her calf from behind her and drew him to the place where they wanted her to plow, and the calf was bleating. When the cow heard her calf bleating, she went despite herself, because of her child.

By the same token, Jacob might have had to be brought down to Egypt in chains, but then G-d declared: "He is My firstborn son; shall I then bring him down in disgrace?" Now, if I provoke Pharaoh [to forcefully bring him to Egypt], I will

not bring him down with befitting honor. Therefore I will draw his son before him, and so he will follow despite himself.

This explanation, however, seems to raise more questions than it answers. Was the manner in which Jacob was made to arrive in Egypt any more pleasant than if he'd been brought down as a prisoner of Pharaoh's? Were the pain and despair of the 22 years in which he mourned his beloved son preferable to the discomfort of physical chains? Certainly Jacob would have readily suffered that indignity to spare Joseph his years of slavery and imprisonment, and his other sons their years of guilt and remorse!

Furthermore, in the final analysis Jacob *was* forced to go down to Egypt, by the fact that G-d had sent Joseph there; in what way was this any less coercive than if he had been physically forced? Why, for that matter, did he have to be coerced in any way? What if G-d would have simply appeared to him one day, and said, "Jacob, take your whole family and go to Egypt. It's all part of My grand plan for the people of Israel" — would Jacob not have complied?

Chassidic teaching explains that two counter-objectives had to be achieved. On the one hand, Jacob had to be *compelled* to relocate to Egypt — a voluntary migration would not have been an exile! *Galut*, by definition, is a place where one does not want to be — a place that is contrary to one's intrinsic self and will. On the other hand, the fact that Jacob arrived in Egypt in honor, glory and in a position of power as the father of that country's ruler rather than as a prisoner in chains meant that he and his descendents would never truly be subject to their host country. Thus the key to Israel's eventual liberation from Egypt was already "programmed" into the circumstances under which their *galut* commenced.

This was G-d's "awesome plot": to force Jacob to go down to Egypt, but to do so in a way that did not entail Egypt's power over him, but his power over Egypt. What brought Jacob to Egypt was the fact that his son was the ruler of the land; but the chain of events that brought this about had to develop without his knowledge and contrary to his will.

*Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
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PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

FROM THE CHASSIDIC MASTERS

THE SYNERGY OF PLANT AND EARTH

The Torah is a work like no other. Beyond being a spiritual guide, a relationship manual, a set of “building specifications” for global growth — it is also a blueprint of creation. As such, every word and letter bears significance, let alone the actual narrative and instructions.

Every personage in this remarkable work has deep spiritual and cosmic significance. Joseph is not merely an abused brother and then, through some quirk of fate, the viceroy of Egypt. Nor is Judah simply the courageous brother who tackles the Egyptian ruler for the release of his youngest brother Benjamin.

On a higher plane, Joseph is etymologically connected to the Hebrew word meaning “to add”. Joseph has the deeper meaning of the process of growth. Judah, etymologically related to the Hebrew word for humble acquiescence, is the source of this growth, just as humility is the ground in which personal development takes root.

The two brothers, Joseph and Judah, represent two levels — vegetation and the inanimate. We are taught in Kabbalah that there exist four levels of finite existence: human, animal, vegetable and inanimate. Joseph, by virtue of his growth in stature and position throughout his life carried the spiritual characteristic of “vegetation” — the propensity to grow and incline towards the sun — the Cosmic Creator. Whereas Judah, through self-effacement and groundedness, represents earth, the inanimate realm.

At an energy level, Joseph represents the *Sefirot* (divine attributes) of emotion, referred to in Kabbalah as *Ze'er Anpin* (the “Minor Visage”) — the attributes *Chessed* through *Yesod* in the realm of *Atzilut*, primarily located in *Yesod*. *Yesod* means “foundation”, and Joseph indeed becomes the foundation for the survival of his family as well as the population of the Egypt. He determines the successful economic strategy for Egypt, and thereby overcomes the severity of the seven-year famine that would otherwise decimate the nation as well as the emergent Jewish nation which at that moment numbered seventy families. Judah represents the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, which is the “ground” of the realm of

Atzilut.

In the Chassidic teachings on Kabbalah, that which is spiritually higher descends to the lower level in the physical realm. Hence Judah is inherently of superior caliber to Joseph. In the future, when the spiritual agenda of creation fully matures, the seemingly lower level, the Judah level, will rise to a higher plane than the Joseph level. Kabbalistically *Malchut* relates directly to *Keter*, the uppermost rung of spiritual energy. Likewise, the earth has the power to make the seed grow. Judah nurtures Joseph.

History must conform to spiritual truths. Therefore it was Judah’s act of selfless courage in facing up to the ruler of Egypt that ultimately led Joseph to reveal himself to his brothers, thereby bringing their father Jacob down to Egypt — the experience that became the crucible from which emerges the Jewish nation.

MASTERY: Each one of us possesses a natural quest for growth and development. That quest is nurtured by our personalities - the “living earth” of our inner selves. The quest represents the “plant” within us. What is your quest in life? How do you express it? Do you allow challenging situations to become your growth spurts? Become aware of your growth patterns and allow the “living earth” of your personality to nurture your plant-like evolution in life.

MEDITATION: Focus on a challenge that you are facing or have faced. Visualise the challenge as a landscape. It may be rugged and crusty, or full of impenetrable thick foliage. Allow the imagery to open up a pathway through the difficult terrain. Slowly embark on the pathway and visualize the pathway providing a safe and sure approach to your goal. Recognize that every challenge is a vision. The way you envision it will determine whether you grow or remain where you are — and where you are may not be a pleasant place.

Follow-up resources: *The Healing Light - Ohr HaShem Meditation* (audio) *The Ten Sefirot of Kabbalah* (audio) available at Rabbi Wolf’s Website (see link below).

Based on *Torah Ohr*, a collection of discourses by Chassidic master Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812); adaptation by Laibl Wolf. Rabbi Wolf, a renowned mystic, author and speaker, lives in Australia and lectures worldwide on Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism. His daily meditations and weekly essays can be viewed on his website, www.laibwolf.com