

Politics & Mysticism in the Weekly Torah Portion ***Parshat (Portion) Vayigash***

by **Ariel Bar Tzadok**

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This week...

- * *Judah & Joseph, More than Just Brothers*
- * *The Two Messiahs, Ben Yosef and Ben David*
- * *Joseph Psychology and David Psychology*
- * *Joseph and the Creation of the Enslaving Socialist State*

Shalom & welcome all.

This week's Torah portion is called Vayigash (Genesis 44:18-47:27)

The Book of Genesis has a tendency to compare brothers. First there was Cain and Abel, then there was Esav and Jacob and then there is Judah and Joseph. These last two sons of Jacob sired descendants who established the two great kingdoms in the Holy Land. Judah and Joseph represent different psychological archetypes and define variant personality types. They have also become synonymous with two ways of serving God.

Indeed, Torah tradition even speaks about there being two coming messiahs, one from Joseph and one from Judah. The reason for the two messiahs is because Joseph has a very different way of looking at the world, and then interacting with it, than does his brother Judah. Joseph is always represented as being more “in the world,” whereas Judah is more “withdrawn” from it. Joseph personality types we can today describe as the extroverts. Judah type personalities can be described as the introverts. The underlying differences in personality type led to the differences of world outlook within the respective tribes. Their fundamental psychological differences is what led to their constant strife and eventual political separation.

There is always an unseen psychological component to social movements and political orientation. Society is made up of individuals. As individuals think individually, so too will the societies that they create think as a whole following the morays, persuasions and even unconscious psychological parameters, and barriers, that define the makeup of the individuals involved. Ultimately, societal norms are merely projections of the individuals who dominate in said society. As altruistic and enlightened a ruler (or body) wish to appear, they are all, nonetheless, merely projecting their own inner views on the outer world. This explains why the histories of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (under Joseph) and the Southern Kingdom of Judah followed the paths that they did. Essentially each nation's history was a byproduct of the psychological dispositions of the majority of its citizenry.

Ezekiel prophesied (Ezek. 37:16-19) that the jealousy and conflict that lasted throughout the history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel (Joseph) would eventually be resolved in messianic times, with Joseph taking his subordinate place under a Judean king of House David. This prophecy refers to far more than a mere political realignment. It addresses

matters that go deep to the heart, to the fundamental psychologies that defined these two men and their perspective Kingdoms. While the Bible is full of information about Joseph himself, and the history of his many descendants, through the Tribes of Ephraim and Menashe, nevertheless, many fail to analyze, or to recognize Joseph personality types and their fundamental differences from Judah personality types.

In the 16th century, the famous Rabbi and Kabbalist Haim Vital of Safed, Israel, culling from many earlier sources, wrote much about the Judah and Joseph personality archetypes and associated them with two major, yet divergent, views of religious interpretation and practice. Rabbi Vital's associations help us to understand the true nature of the histories of these ancient peoples and also enables us to look towards the future to recognize Joseph and Judah personality traits in modern times and in segments of present society. By recognizing the “Josephs” and “Judahs” amongst us today, we recognize more about their personality types and how two messiahs are to come each representing a very different picture as to what redemption is supposed to look like.

Joseph was the the family extrovert. He always “got involved,” but not always necessarily for the good. As scripture records, while he socialized with his brothers, he also spoke badly about them to their father. One might dismiss this as the immature behavior of an adolescent child. But Joseph was one of twelve brothers. Scripture does not record any such adolescent behavior occurring with any of his other brothers.

Later, as a servant in the house of Potifer, we see Joseph, a foreign slave, one who even later, as Prime Minister of the entire country, was not considered worthy enough to eat at the same table with Egyptians, was able to rise in short time, to become the right hand man of his master, trusted with his entire house. Joseph was apparently friendly, outgoing and physically attractive enough to draw the adulterous attention of Potifer's wife. A modest introvert, however intelligent or otherwise blessed by God, by nature would not be drawing such attention to himself. But Joseph was the extrovert. He was extravagant, outgoing and very much as we would say today “over the top” in just about everything.

Even Joseph's earliest dreams reveals his unconscious sense of grandeur and sense of mission. Like father Jacob, Joseph was a dreamer. Yet, unlike father Jacob who did not talk about his grand dreams and the promises God made to him therein, Joseph not only talked about his dreams of grandeur, but did so with apparent boastfulness before his family. Why would the youngest son talk to his older brothers about dreams of dominance over them, whose interpretation were clear and known to everyone. Such an act on Joseph's part does not speak well for his wisdom or for his modesty. Maybe it was this exact trait of not-to-subtle boastfulness that got him noticed by Potifer's wife in the first place.

Now, Joseph did grow up. Hard times honed him into becoming a righteous man. Yet, his dreams of grandeur did not dissipate even when he became Prime Minister over Egypt. Scripture records that it was Joseph who used his high position in government to manipulate the Egyptian economy to literally drive the entire population of Egypt into slavery. Joseph, righteous man as he was, still followed in the footsteps of ancient Nimrod and created big government and what we call today “the nanny state.” Simple, modest, introverts focus on controlling the inner state of one's soul, not the outer state of one's nation. Such an extroverted pursuit of political and economic control violates every fundamental freedom that G-d has endowed in humanity.

Joseph's creation of the “nanny state” in Egypt came back to haunt him. As American President Gerald Ford once said, “government that is big enough to give you everything is also big enough to take away from you everything.” ***Just as Joseph created the state that enslaved its people, the people of Joseph, the entire House of Israel, became enslaved by the very system that Joseph himself had created for Pharaoh! What a lesson there is for us to learn here! The best of intentions used to create a monster does not ever neutralize that monster. Sooner or later the monster turns on its maker and devours all.*** As later scripture records, Joseph's descendants have suffered from this throughout their entire history.

Rabbi Hayim Vital attributed to Joseph the extroverted expression of religion, called in Hebrew, the pshat. Pshat is usually defined as the simple meanings of religion, but its major emphasis is on externals. Pshat is the external, platonic face of religion. As Joseph was more interested in appearances and not necessarily in essence, Joseph became the archetype of externals-based religion and platonic societies. Platonic externals always emphasize correct form as being the ultimate goal and end-all of expression. How one appears means everything to the external platonic.

Religion that emphasizes external form over internal spirit is expressing the spirit of Joseph. This is the pshat. Needless to say, overemphasis on form at the expense of substance leads to loss of essence and thus the corruption of form. This is what happened in ancient Egypt, beginning with Joseph and ending with Pharaoh. By overemphasizing forms and structures Joseph becomes the archetypal “daddy” of the big government “nanny state.” This is true whether we speak of national governments or of religious, ecclesiastical authorities. Judaism has suffered under much stifling ecclesiastical abuse as has every other religion, when external forms are emphasized at the expense of internal essence and true devote spiritual sincerity.

Now we turn to Judah. While Joseph, separated from the family, is in Egypt learning the consequences of his flamboyant ways, Judah also separates from the family and goes his merry way. Like Uncle Esau, Judah marries a local girl who sires him three sons. Scripture tells us that soon after marriage, the oldest two sons aroused Divine anger and were struck down. While waiting for Judah's third son to become of age to fulfill the obligation of the levitate marriage, his daughter-in-law concocts a plan to seduce Judah himself. Tamar, the daughter in law, dresses up as a prostitute and lies in wait for Judah, who solicits her sexual services without any sense of wrongdoing. While Joseph is in Egypt being tempted by and resisting the advances made by Potifer's wife, Judah is soliciting a prostitute who unbeknown to him is his daughter in law. So while Joseph disciplines his sexual urges, Judah does not. For having such control, Joseph acquired the title, HaTzadik (the one who does what's right).

Although Judah has strayed from the family by marrying a local woman, scripture does not say who the other brothers married and where these wives came from. What we do know is that somehow, in the interim, Judah has risen to a position of leadership amongst his brothers. When the brothers descend down into Egypt with Benjamin, Joseph's brother, it was only Judah who made a pledge to his father that Jacob considered acceptable. Genesis records how Judah defiantly stood up to the Prime Minister of Egypt, not knowing it was Joseph to defend his brother Benjamin and if necessary sacrifice himself on his behalf.

While Joseph became known for his bravado and righteousness, both forms of extroversion, Judah, became known for his self-sacrifice, a trait only cultivated by internal discipline.

When confronting the Prime Minister of Egypt, Judah is here very sincere. Yet, all throughout their early encounters Joseph, true to form, is playing games. While he recognizes his brothers, looking now completely like an Egyptian man (except for his skin color), Joseph was no longer recognized as the young Hebrew lad that they last saw some twenty-two years earlier. Joseph took advantage of the situation and made-believe he had supernatural knowledge of the brothers in order to frighten them. The brothers not suspecting that they were being tricked, fell for it completely. Joseph continued the masquerade until his conscience got the best of him and finally broke down confessing the truth of his identity.

Can you imagine how the brothers must have been stunned into absolute silence and disbelief? One moment they are standing before a mighty Dark Lord Wizard, Prime Minister of Egypt who holds over them the power of life and death and then suddenly, instead of a Dark Lord standing before them there is their bratty little brother now all grown up. Joseph tested his brothers and Judah rose up to the occasion and passed the test. Joseph, the man of forms, tested Judah the man of essence, to verify whether or not his commitment to Benjamin was sincere. True to his essence, Judah acted accordingly with self sacrifice ready to surrender himself to slavery rather than violate the word he made to his father about Benjamin's safety.

Judah came to represent the man of character, the fallen man who repents and rises up to the task, taking on the mantle of responsibility. Judah is the introvert and is in touch with essence showing less concern for form. As such, Rabbi Vital associates Judah (and David) with sincere devotional experiential religion. In Hebrew, this level is called Sod, the secrets. And why is it a secret? The answer is because at this level of religious expression, where essence means everything, the relationship between the person and God is most personal and intense. It is internal and as such not visibly seen or measurable by outsiders who judge only by forms. To such platonic types the relationship of the devotee is a mystery, a secret which defies platonic external forms.

So, this Judah-level of religious observance is a secret, but it not a secret to Judah, but only a secret to Joseph who due to his platonic emphasis on form over substance cannot measure the substance or even grasp its reality. Judah-types always frustrate Joseph-types and this is the underlying psychological reason why platonic ecclesiastical leaders often show little regard, if not outright hostility to those who have intensely personal and experiential relationships with the Divine, a reality that the Joseph-types, in their present forms cannot have or even comprehend.

In the future there are destined to be two messiahs for Israel. There is the unsuccessful one from Joseph, who according to prophecy, is destined to fight external wars and attempt to impose order. His messianic mission is destined to fail and he is to suffer death as a result. The successful messiah comes from Judah (David). The reason why there is to be an unsuccessful one from Joseph is because of the nature of the Joseph personality. Joseph represents the platonic external outlook on life and religion. Joseph's messiah endeavors to bring about the redemption through natural means. Like Biblical Joseph, the Messiah son of Joseph will endeavor to create big government and through the wiles of manipulation and

strength of arms try to force the messianic redemption upon the world. Because his concept of redemption is platonic and external as he is, his attempt to bring redemption will fail. He will die just as his attempts will be thwarted.

Judah on the other hand will be very different. Judah is the man of depth, of spirit, of essence and conviction. His attempt to bring redemption will succeed because his redemption will first redeem the human soul and only once redemption is internalized will it then materialize in to the political and social arenas.

Joseph's message is let's fix the form and the insides will fix themselves. Judah's message is that Joseph's message is dead wrong! Judah says rectify the spirit first, redeem the soul, purify one's essence and then redemption will happen naturally and normally even as Heaven has so ordained it. According to Judah's way, the Messianic Temple is destined to descend fully built from Heaven. But Joseph wants to build his Third Temple. By emphasizing platonic externals, Joseph's version of the Messianic Temple will be as empty and bereft of God's Holy Presence as was the Second Temple in Jerusalem long ago. That Temple was destroyed by the Romans. It could not last because it had no Divine Presence as its soul. So, too Joseph's modern attempt to build the Temple will be destined to the same destructive fate.

While Joseph stood as a righteous man in Egypt, still he was removed and distant from the ways of the House of Jacob. Although he had strayed, Judah comes back. Although Judah led his own life, scripture does not say that he ever left the family. Judah remains true to the essence of the House of Jacob and to the Torah of Israel. No one in the religious community can today be called Judah unless they embrace the Sod (secret) level of religion, thus coming to know and experience the reality of the Divine Presence of God that comes from the essence of one's soul. Everyone else who is only interested in more and more forms of rigid compliance are Joseph, who like Joseph's messiah are destined to die and be forgotten. Platonic external focus has no solid foundation, it never has and Joseph never will.

In the end, Ezekiel's prophecy will be fulfilled and Joseph will become subservient to Judah. Joseph-types will learn the ways of the Judah-types to penetrate beyond platonic externals and to experience, know and embrace the Living Presence of the Knowable God. Joseph and Judah are far more than brothers. They are archetypes not only of personalities but also of the path to psychological individuation. Remember, Joseph must subservient to Judah, the external platonic focus must give way to the inner experience of essence. When redemption comes first into the heart of the individual, only from there can it go forth to overtake the world.

Any comments? Please send them to me at koshertorah1@yahoo.com