

December 19, 2015

Va-Yiggash (to encounter)  
Genesis 44:18-47:27

Temple Sinai  
Rhonda Karlton Rosen, text  
David Goldstein, chant

## Niggun

“Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing, there is a field. I will meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about. Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other* doesn’t make any sense.”  
Rumi, The Essential Rumi, p. 36

“Our relationship with ourselves, with others, and God is exactly the same.”  
Jonathan Omer-Man

This afternoon’s contemplation draws largely upon the writings of the Sefat Emet.

We look at the tension between Judah and Joseph.  
Judah approaches him, and Joseph cannot hold himself back

We sit with words, with chant, and silence to draw up what we need, to move toward the inner-most point, coming to meet...

There are two images we draw upon in this portion--Drawing up what we need from the well, and moving through the gates

On this work in silence:  
From the Zohar--

“Whoever offers a prayer before his Lord should not let his voice be heard while praying. Whoever lets his voice be heard while praying—that prayer is not heard. Why? Because prayer is not an audible voice; that audible voice is not prayer. What is prayer? Another voice, dependent on the audible voice...rather pray in a whisper—with that inaudible voice. This is the prayer that is always accepted. This is silent prayer, accepted by the blessed Holy One when it is fashioned fittingly with passion, intention, and harmony—actualizing every day the unity of one’s Lord...A silent voice is the sublime voice, from which all voices issue.

Zohar Vol. III, Daniel Matt translation, pp. 288-9

## Part I

## **Our soul's search for the hidden aspects of God in this world and the opportunity of the Sabbath**

The Sefat Emet writes:

In our Sabbath table song we sing: "Come to the entrance of the apple field."  
Here we shall meet the Shekhinah, the indwelling presence of God.

We are taught that the field is everywhere  
We use prayer and worship to come to the opening of this point of the field.  
Sefat Emet: The Language of Truth, Translated and interpreted by Arthur Green  
p. 67

And on the Sabbath the **gate** is open.

We are taught that the Sabbath is "foretaste of the world to come, even though it is within time." Today.

From the portion--

"Then Judah went up to him, and said...."  
Genesis 44:18

The Sefat Emet writes:

**Truth—Joseph, and Faith—Judah, are 2 rungs**

"One approaches the other one." (Job 41:8)  
We take faith in the Oneness—even though we are incapable of full understanding. Faith will lead us to the truth that the One is nothing but God Himself, God is the All.

"On that day shall the Lord be One and His name One." (Zech 14:9)

This is a hidden mystery—God's oneness is beyond our creaturely power to conceive

At the same time

Our sages write that "Judah went up to him" and ask, who is this 'him'? And they read this and say, Judah went up to the God within himself, opening to the inwardness, to the indwelling spark of holiness.  
["Bi"—read here as within me-my Lord (Gen 44:18)]

And Judah's name contains YHVH. Judah went up to the "YHVH within me"

By means of faith that God oversees all, a person can set himself right even in times of hiding from oneself, hiding from God.

We are told: You should have faith that you have within yourself the soul of the living God. "The soul You placed within me, she is pure."

We are told that when we negate ourselves before this divine life-point, wanting to know that truth, it will be revealed to us.

"We find this with Judah (for right after he said, 'my Lord is within me') we read that Joseph was no longer able to hold back."  
Ibid, p. 68

Truth approaches faith, after faith approaches truth.

The opening to the most inward point is easiest to know within the holiness of the Sabbath. The Sabbath holds this opportunity open to us.

**Chant:** Elohai neshama shenatata bi t'hora hi  
The soul you have planted in me, she is pure

**Silence**

## **Part II: Showing up, stepping forward**

We are of Judah. We have the same opportunity, responsibility for spiritual and moral maturation.

When Judah was a boy, he plotted with his brothers against Joseph. What changed in Judah to make this moment of approach possible?

What changed was Judah's heart. He underwent the maturation of understanding that comes only with knowing one's own imperfection and the pain of loss. He came to see his father's pain only after he knew his own. He spoke to Joseph from the truth of his own heart.

With Judah's full and courageous humanity, Joseph remembers his own humanity. External appearances are abandoned. Their two souls can finally meet, with their pain and hope and longing expressed.

"Judah approached him" (Gen 44:18)

"Joseph was no longer able to hold back."

The "him" here refers to Joseph, to Judah's own self, and also to God.

Judah offered nothing new in his words, nor did he have a good claim with which to approach Joseph. But as he clarified the truth of the matter, salvation came to him.

“Judah approached him...[for your servant took responsibility for the lad].”  
Each person is responsible for his soul...  
Ibid. p.69

“Even if that soul is very sullied by sin, an act of repentance from the depth of the heart, as expressed in [the question] “How will I go up to my Father?” can transform sins into merits...Just as a person can transform the heart by an act of true repentance, so can all the deeds of sin be transformed as well.” Even if this process remains in mystery.

“Israel are in fact God’s own portion and lot. ‘Even a Jew who sins remains a Jew.’ Because of this, we can be strong enough to approach that divine power hidden within us...’Judah approached him’ means[s] that he approached himself. He said: “My Lord is within me”

“This is the meaning of ‘my Lord is in me.’ He still maintained the faith that the divine life was contained within him, even though it was hidden and he did not know how....This is true of every hiding.”  
Ibid. p. 70

This is true of our own hiding.

We can continue to mature throughout our lives, as we awaken to our own pain of imperfection and loss, and our longing for unfolding truth, held by faith. We are Judah, and my Lord is within me.

**Chant:** Eh'yeh asher eh'yeh  
I am what I am becoming

**Silence**

### **Part III: Drawing forth**

“Then Judah went up to him”: “The designs in a man’s mind are deep waters, but a man of understanding can draw them out” [Proverbs 20:5] “The designs in a man’s mind are deep waters” refers to Joseph. But as much as Joseph was wise, Judah came and ~~defeated~~ [reached out to] him, as it is said, “Then Judah went up to him.” What does this resemble? A deep pit into which no one could climb down. Then a clever person came and brought a long rope that reached down into the water so he could draw from it. So was Joseph deep, and Judah came to draw from him.”

Tanhuma Yasham  
(Zornberg p. 322)

“It is like a deep well of fresh cool water that no one can drink from because of its depth. Along comes a wise person and ties cord to cord, and thread to

thread, until he is able to reach to fresh water at the bottom and draw it back up for all to drink”  
Breishit Rabbah

Judah's words, his truthful presence, penetrated into Joseph's heart.

Judah uncovered the depth of Joseph's hiddenness and pulled him out of the pit he and his bothers threw him into so many years ago. There is a parallel spiritual quest—to draw out of the depths of the world and all its hiddenness the cool waters of spiritual sustenance and divine revelation.

“Judah knows about change, about sin and repentance...about pain that alters perception. He knows how to ‘tie rope to rope, cord to cord, twine to twine,’ in order to reach down into Joseph's pit...  
....the rope contains both distance and connection.  
Genesis: The Beginning of Desire, Zornberg, p. 323

“Counsel is like deep water in the human heart; the wise one draws it forth”  
[Prov. 20:5]

It is the task of Judah and the tribes to draw water from deep wells.

“... Joseph draws new light from the heavenly root...

“Deep water in the human heart is the oral Torah, the ‘eternal life implanted within us.”

“These treasures are hidden in the human heart.  
Sefat Emet, p.71

The Sefat Emet tells us:

“You need to realize the potential within you, to seek out the lost treasure within your own soul. This search after your own loss is the religious work of the weekday. But you also have to seek ‘help from the Holy’ [Ps 20:3], the newness that comes from heaven. That is the Sabbath, which is called ‘a goodly gift...’ That is why there is so much happiness and joy on the Sabbath...”  
Ibid., p. 72

**Chant:** Vatimalay ha'aretz et hamayim  
and the land was filled with water

**Silence**

**Niggun**