

## **Then Yehudah approached him and said. (44:18)**

To approach someone prior to speaking to him is self-evident. Unless one wants to shout across the room, he must move over towards the individual with whom he is about to speak. Why does the Torah seem to underscore that Yehudah “approached” Yosef? It could have written simply that Yehudah spoke with Yosef, without mentioning that he approached him. Indeed, every word in the Torah has a purpose. The Torah is Divinely authored. Hashem places a word in the Torah for a distinct reason, to convey an important and meaningful message. What is *Vayigash*, “And he approached,” teaching us?

**Horav Nissan Alpert, zl**, quotes the *Midrash Rabbah* which teaches that the word *Vayigash* indicates three things: an act of war; an action intimating appeasement; a move to prayer; *milchamah, doron* and *tefillah*. Rav Alpert relates that he heard from a prominent scholar that a similarity exists among the three *hagashos*, approaches. Just as departure from war demands preparation, so, too, do appeasement and prayer require an element of preparation. One must gather himself together, prepare himself physically and emotionally to mollify someone; likewise he must prepare himself when he is about to entreat Hashem.

Rav Alpert adds another similarity. In anticipation of battle, one must know his enemy, his strengths and weaknesses, his vulnerabilities and fortified strongholds. If one lacks proper reconnaissance, he will fall in battle. This applies equally to prayer. One must reconnoiter the area – but this time the reconnaissance is introspective; it is turned inward towards himself. He must prove himself, taking advantage of his strengths, and addressing his weakness as well. He must question himself concerning his relationship with Hashem. Only after self-examination and intense scrutiny of one’s inner-self and attaining proper emotional composure, may one begin pouring out his heart in supplication to Hashem.

Similarly, when one needs to win over an individual in an attempt to appease him, the process of discovery is much the same. He asks himself: What type of person is he? What motivates him? What makes him happy? How can I penetrate his emotions, so that my appeal to him will be successful?

Prayer, warfare and appeasement – all require a *Vayigash*, an approach of coming closer. Yehudah’s *Vayigash* to Yosef was an essential preamble to his successful appeal. If he had just barged in and begun speaking, he would have been met by a stone wall.

Yehudah needed to reach Yosef’s innermost self. It was necessary for him to appeal to that which was closest to Yosef, to that which would effect the greatest success. This was reflected in Yosef’s constant queries about their father, Yaakov *Avinu*. Even when he sent the brothers on the return trip, he told them to go in peace to their father. Yehudah understood that he had to play the “Yaakov card” with Yosef if he wanted to convince him to release Binyamin. Therefore, he told Yosef that his father would be grief-stricken if Binyamin did not return. His plan worked, as his

“approach” led to Yosef’s “revelation.”