

# *Reflections of Redemption*

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,  
Based on the talks of the  
Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Pekudei, 5782  
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 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד  
**Shagalov**  
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

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*of*  
*Redemption*

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by  
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

# Pekudai

## COUNTING TO REDEMPTION

*Counting connects the last Torah reading of Exodus to the first. Although the theme of Exodus is Redemption, it begins with an accounting of Jacob and his family and ends with an accounting of the donations and vessels of the Sanctuary. By connecting counting and Redemption, the limited and the limitless, the Torah reading teaches that the true goal is to reveal the Infinite within the finite.*

This, the last Torah reading of the book of *Exodus*, starts with an accounting of the contributions towards the Tabernacle, then details its vessels and utensils, concluding with its construction. The culmination of the process was the descent of the Divine Presence: “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the L-rd filled the Tabernacle.” So powerful was the Divine Presence, that even Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting.

Since Moses refrained from entering, G-d had to call him. Thus begins the book of *Leviticus*, with G-d calling Moses, inviting him inside the Tent of Meeting to hear about the sacrifices. The transition makes sense: the last half of *Exodus* describes the construction of the Tabernacle, and *Leviticus* begins by defining the sacrifices offered there.

However, *Exodus* doesn't end with this successful raising of the Tabernacle, indicated by the descent of the Divine Presence. Rather, it concludes by explaining the role of the Cloud of Glory. The presence or removal of this Cloud determined the movements of the Jewish people. When it rested on the Tabernacle, they encamped. When it was removed, they began to journey. The placement of the Cloud determined when they wandered and when they rested.

This interlude seems out of place. Apparently, the text flows smoothly without it – from building the Tabernacle in *Exodus* to using it in *Leviticus*. Why interrupt that? Besides, later on, in Numbers, the Torah describes all the journeys of the children of Israel. Why give an abbreviated version here, out of order?

There's another question: What connection does the end of *Exodus* have with the beginning? In general, the book of *Exodus* concerns the Redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt. Yet it begins with a list of names and ends with an accounting and inventory of the Tabernacle. In fact, the Hebrew name for the book, *Shmos*, means "names." The name of the last Torah reading, *Pekudai*, means accounting.

So *Exodus*, which focuses on the Redemption, begins and ends with numbering – whether the names of the children of Jacob or the money and material given to the Tabernacle. Accordingly, the concept of Redemption is connected with the concept of numbering.

But these seem to be contradictory concepts. Counting indicates limitation: there is precisely this amount of money, this number of people, etc. Redemption, on the other hand, indicates a departure from limits; one is not restricted by particular boundaries, physical or spiritual.

This paradox of combining the numbered and the innumerable we find within the two Torah readings as well. The first Torah reading names the children of Israel who went into Egypt, then says they multiplied and increased exceedingly, as if without limit. The last Torah reading begins with an accounting of the vessels of and donations to the Tabernacle, but concludes with the indwelling of the Divine Presence. G-d, the Infinite, comes to reside in the confines and structure of the Tabernacle.

So, the content of the first and last Torah readings of *Exodus* concern counting, a limitation, while the book as a whole concerns

Redemption, the limitless. And this paradoxical combination of the finite and infinite, of the numbered and the innumerable, is also found **within** the first and last Torah readings.

This pattern of the book of *Exodus* serves as a paradigm. The purpose of both the individual and of creation as a whole is Redemption, a level without limitations on spiritual growth and awareness. We must rise above the measurements and boundaries of the world. But this must be done **within** the world, within the confines and borders of physical existence. There must be a conjunction and union of the finite and the infinite, the limited and the limitless. The book of *Exodus*, which provides the prototype for Redemption and teaches the concept of Moshiach, exemplifies this fusion of opposites, of the infinite within the finite.

This strange truth about reality can be viewed a different way: Creation occurred because G-d desired a dwelling place in the lower realms. This requires two things: First, an actual **dwelling**, a place of G-dliness. Second, there must be a **lower realm**. The dwelling must be located in this physical realm, the lowest of all possible worlds.

The practical expression of these two aspects is the difference between the Jewish people and the world. The dwelling place of G-dliness is the Jewish soul, since, as the *Zohar* states, The Holy One, Blessed be He and Israel are entirely one. Where is this dwelling? Where are Jewish souls found? In the physical world, the lower realm. When a Jew is a proper dwelling, then the world does not prevent a revelation of G-dliness. Rather, G-dliness can now also reside within the domain of the physical.

The book of *Exodus* reveals that the world was created “for the sake of Torah and the sake of Israel.” It begins by counting the children of Israel, to show that they are united with and beloved by G-d. It concludes with the construction of the Tabernacle, the utilization of the physical world for a spiritual purpose.

This explains the connection between the beginning of *Exodus* and its conclusion. Redemption is the process of bringing the Divine Presence into the physical world, of revealing the Infinite within the finite. Hence, the connection between numbering the innumerable: At first, the children of Israel are named. But they are not limited to the seventy souls that entered Egypt, for the children of Israel, one with the Infinite, will be as countless as the stars. At the end, the articles associated with the Tabernacle are counted. The physicality of the world is emphasized. But because the Tabernacle is built by the Jewish people, the material is transformed into the spiritual, and the Divine Presence dwells there – openly.

What of our original question, why *Exodus* concludes with a digest of Israel's journeys? Is this not an interruption between the Tabernacle of *Exodus* and the sacrifices of *Leviticus*?

Actually, no. The sacrifices of *Leviticus* parallel the Cloud-directed journeys of *Exodus*. Both fulfill the purpose of the Tabernacle, built to house the Divine Presence. The Tabernacle was not a goal in itself; building it provided the means to transform the entire world into a Divine dwelling. G-dliness penetrates the world in one of two ways: by bringing the physical into the Tabernacle or by bringing the Tabernacle to a place currently devoid of the Divine Presence. Sacrifices subjugate the animal and materialistic to the spiritual. Journeying through the wilderness extends the dominion of holiness to locations as yet unredeemed.

Like our ancestors, we must be prepared to travel among the nations, into a spiritual desert. For the wanderings in the desert allude to the wandering among the nations during exile. Our travels in exile purify the environment, transforming the wilderness of the nations into a residence for the Tabernacle, a place where sacrifices can be offered.

The removal of the cloud from above the Tabernacle metaphorically implies a concealment of G-d's presence, a darkness in the world,

even a personal darkness. Yet when G-d's presence is removed, elevated beyond perception, it is also time to move forward with our Divine service. True, while traveling, while in exile, we have no direct perception of G-dliness. But only by transporting the Tabernacle can we reach our destination, bring the Redemption. For we do not roam aimlessly through exile, but move inexorably forward towards the days of Moshiach.

As in those days, when the Cloud of Glory rested on the Tabernacle at journey's end, so too will we, along with the world transformed by our mitzvos, see G-dliness revealed in the Third Holy Temple.

*(Based on Likkutei Sichos 16, pp. 475-480)*

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**

Mrs. **Chana** (Carrie) bas Reb **Meir** ע"ה **Greenberg**  
Passed away on 9 Sivan, 5781

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