

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Leah Rivka** bas Reb **Dovid** ע"ה
Dekhtyarevsky
Passed away on Pesach Sheni - 14 Iyar, 5777
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
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her children and grandchildren שיחיו

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 Behar-Bechukotai, 5777
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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Behar

WHEN-THEN

What are the people to eat during the year of Shemittah and the one that follows? During Shemittah, the sabbatical year, one may not sow, or reap, or gather. This question the Jewish people will surely ask. But it does not indicate a lack of faith. Rather, when they ask it, then the response will come from Above: I will command My blessing upon you. We ask the same question regarding Moshiach: when we are at the last stage of exile, when we have no strength to sow mitzvahs, how shall we sustain ourselves spiritually? G-d promises, I will command my blessing and bring the Redemption.

This week's Torah reading begins with the laws of Shemittah, the seventh or sabbatical year when the land lay fallow. During Shemittah, the sabbatical year, one may not sow, or reap, or gather.

This raises the question, what are the people to eat? The Torah apparently anticipates the question, for it states: "When you will ask, what shall we eat in the seventh year? We may not sow, nor gather in our increase. Then I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth produce for the three years." That is, when G-d commands His blessing, the land will produce enough for the sixth, seventh and eighth years. The harvest will be sufficient for the normal crop, the year when the land lies fallow, and into the eighth year, until the new crop can be harvested.

Of course, this also alludes to Moshiach. As is well known, the "six years" refer to the six thousand years of the world, and the seventh or Shemittah year refers to the seven thousandth, or Sabbatical, millennium – the era of Moshiach. So the question,

That state arrives with Moshiach, brought on by the arousal from below – the tithing of animals, the ten soul-powers, "and My commandments you will keep." It is our actions, performing the mitzvot in response to a recognition of G-dliness, that transforms the world, gives G-dliness itself a permanent home here in the physical realm.

This explains why the coming of Moshiach depends on each and every one of us, our personal activity and Divine service.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 17:332-339)

of holiness – such as the birth of a first-born animal – forces us to recognize the presence of holiness and thus be elevated. Both our awareness and our daily activities become more spiritually oriented, more attuned to the G-dliness innate to the world. This is an obvious prelude to the times of Moshiach, when such awareness will be fully manifest.

The second type of spiritual service, that of tithing the animals, represents man's own efforts to elevate himself, an arousal from below. In this way we take the initiative to refine our natures, to transform the animal within us into a vehicle for holiness. Through our mitzvos, we make the world a dwelling place for G-d.

The beginning of the Torah portion reflects this dichotomy. It begins as follows: "If in My statutes you will walk, and My commandments you will keep." Statutes (*Chukim*) are Divinely ordained mitzvos, without an apparent reason. Walking indicates continual motion – an unlimited movement. Such a Divine service has infinite potential. Being motivated to fulfill the Torah's commands from Above arouses a desire to be elevated. Nevertheless, this "walking," this unlimited arousal, is missing something.

Whatever elevation occurs as a result has no permanence. Even the greatest self-sacrifice, aroused from Above, does not permanently transform the individual. For the rest of the soul-powers to be affected, the person must act. The Divine soul comes into the body so that man here below, with his animal soul, becomes a vehicle for G-dliness. Thus, there must be as well an arousal from below, the service of "My commandments you will keep." By using one's own soul-powers – the tenth, the animal, to perform the mitzvos, one becomes a vessel for keeping and maintaining the unlimited revelation of G-dliness. This revelation until now has been apparent only occasionally and temporarily. Yet the ideal is for this arousal from Above – the first-born, *Chochmah*, "If in My statutes you will walk" – to be visible openly to one and all.

"what shall we eat in the seventh year?" refers not just to the past, to the times of the first Two Temples, but to the future, the time of the Third Temple, as well.

The Rebbe points out that the passage is phrased in an unusual manner. It assumes that at some point the Jewish people will question G-d. The phrase reads, "When you will ask." The question is not conditional; the emphasis is on **when**, not **if**. The Jewish people will surely ask, "What shall we eat in the seventh year?"

This seems to indicate a lack of faith. After all, if G-d has commanded us to observe a Sabbatical year, to let the land lie fallow every seventh year, surely G-d knows we still must eat. Our faith in G-d demands we assume that he will find a means to provide for our needs.

Also, the question has already been answered, even before it was asked! In the preceding verse, G-d promises that the land will yield its fruit and there will be enough to eat. The Torah states, "You shall perform My statutes and My ordinances you will observe and do them; and you will dwell in the land in safety. The land will yield her fruit and you will eat until satisfied and dwell securely on it. And when you will ask, what shall we eat in the seventh year . . ."

G-d has just promised that observance of the laws of Shemittah produces security and an abundant harvest, yet the Torah says, "When you will ask . . ." Clearly, the difficulty lies with the definitive **when**. That word assumes and guarantees the question will be asked. Yet the passage seems to indicate there's no need to ask it, since G-d has already promised us and assured us what will happen: "I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth produce for three years."

But why should there be a need to ask "what shall we eat in the seventh year" when we've just been told "The land will yield her fruit and you will eat until satisfied and dwell securely on it?"

We must conclude that when the Torah assures us a question **will** be asked, it also tells us **why** the question will be asked. That is, the grammatical construction of **When-Then**, of **When** you will ask, **Then** there will be such-and-such a response, indicates the nature and appropriateness of the question.

For example, the Torah uses the same construction elsewhere, in regard to redemption of the first born. It says, “When your son will ask, what is this?” and we are told to answer him in a certain way. Later, the Torah advises us regarding a different situation. There it says, “When your son will ask, what are these testimonies, statutes and ordinances?” There, too, we are to answer according to his motivation and mental capacity.

We see, therefore, that there are different types of questions, each with a different motivation. The grammatical construction of When-Then tells us the type of question and the nature of the response. That a particular question must and will be asked doesn’t necessarily indicate a lack of faith. Rather, it indicates the relationship the questioner has with G-d.

Let’s look at the verse in question with this in mind. It states: ““When you will ask, what shall we eat in the seventh year? We may not sow, nor gather in our increase.” The details – “We may not sow, nor gather in our increase” – may seem superfluous, but they’re not. They are part of the question. So, the question is not really about **what** we will eat, but **how** we will eat. (This is reminiscent of the wise son, one of the four sons discussed on Passover. He, too, asks about details – “When your son will ask, what are these testimonies, statutes and ordinances?” The details indicate that his question is not **if** we should observe the laws, nor even **what** laws should be observed, but rather, **how** should we observe them.)

In other words, since G-d has already promised that the land

sacrifices.” This corresponds to tithing animals. Here, man’s actions – his counting – determines the holiness of the animal. He must sacrifice – labor and struggle – to bring his inner animal, the animal nature, closer to G-dliness. It requires effort and exertion to refine and sensitize our desires and inclinations, thus elevating ourselves.

At a deeper level, the sacrifice of the first-born refers to man’s first spiritual attribute. This attribute, *Chochmah* or Wisdom, differs from all others. All other spiritual attributes develop within man; as such, one must work to reveal them. *Chochmah*, coming from above, is an inheritance to every Jew. The first spiritual attribute does not depend on our actions, but expresses the essence of the soul, its innate connection with G-dliness. Therefore, it is the source of a Jew’s self-sacrifice, his willingness to dedicate his entire being to sanctifying G-d’s Name and making the world a dwelling place for G-dliness.

Since self-sacrifice is innate, a Jew’s essence, his holiness is manifest throughout history. Similarly, the first born remains sanctified even now.

The sacrifice of the tenth, on the other hand, refers to the other spiritual attributes. These ten soul-powers depend on man’s activity. They require effort to be fully developed and expressed. Thus, changing conditions affect our ability to express or develop them completely. When the Temple stood, and G-dliness was openly revealed, the ten soul-powers could be fully activated. The offering of the tenth animal represents complete dedication of the ten soul-powers. Now, in the time of exile, when G-dliness is concealed, the ten soul-powers are likewise limited in their expression. Hence, the tenth animal cannot be made holy. We will not have that ability again until the times of Moshiach.

This helps us understand the connection between the beginning of the Torah portion and the end. From the beginning of Vayikra we learn that the sacrifice of the first born animal, which is always holy and always in force, indicates an arousal from Above. The presence

we will again be able to offer sacrifices. However, there is a deeper lesson, one that tells us how to get there.

Vayikra begins with the instruction, “A person, when he will bring from you a sacrifice to G-d.” The book concludes with the laws of two sacrifices, the first-born animal and tithing of animals.

These two offerings, discussed last, illustrate general concepts indicated at the beginning of Vayikra. It is well-known that sacrifices epitomize and symbolize the nature of man’s Divine service. There are two types of Divine service, illustrated by these two offerings. One is a response to an arousal from Above. Recognition of holiness compels us to act according to the Divine Will. This is the service of the first-born, automatically sanctified from the moment of birth. Its holiness comes with it, so to speak, given from Above. No human action makes it holy.

The other type of service is an arousal from below. Man takes the initiative to fulfill G-d’s commands, bringing G-dliness into the world. This is the service of tithing animals. The dedication, and thus holiness, of the tenth animal depends completely on human action.

The very beginning of Vayikra alludes to these two types of service. Vayikra begins, “Adam, when he will sacrifice from you.” In Jewish mysticism, the form of man reflects the structure of the spiritual worlds. “Adam” thus refers not just to a person, but to the Supernal Man or *Adam HaElyon*. This human-structured spirituality is the first and highest manifestation of G-dliness, forming and influencing every aspect of creation.

Thus, “Adam, when he will sacrifice from you,” indicates that *Adam HaElyon*, the highest level of G-dliness within creation, arouses a person to sacrifice, or draw closer, to G-d. This parallels the sacrifice of the first-born animal: the holiness is already there, forcing us to recognize its presence. That recognition arouses a desire to be elevated, to become closer to G-dliness.

Next the Torah states, “From the animal you will bring your

will be fruitful and that there will be plenty to eat, we are only asking, how will that happen? What method will G-d use to provide us with our needs during the Shemittah year? Will it be natural or miraculous? Will it be manna, as in the desert? To this G-d answers that the land itself will produce enough for three years. The sixth year will be bountiful beyond measure, beyond nature, beyond reason.

G-d’s statement that “I will command my blessing in the sixth year, and it will provide produce for three years” is not only a situation beyond nature, it’s the opposite of nature. According to nature, the land becomes weaker each year. This fact is one of the reasons for Shemittah, to give the land a rest and allow it to renew itself. And precisely when the land is weakest does G-d promise it will produce three times as much! This is why the Jewish people will certainly ask, “What shall we eat” – because the answer goes beyond reason and logic.

The question applies not only to the past, to Shemittah during the years when the Temple stood, but to the future as well, to the times of Moshiach, that of the Third Temple. We are in the sixth year, the sixth millennium, that which precedes Moshiach. Since our sustenance in the era of Redemption depends on our actions now, what shall we eat? G-d has promised Redemption if we observe the mitzvos. “But we can neither sow, nor gather in our increase.” We cannot even maintain the level of Torah and mitzvos of previous generations, much less increase it. How can we bring Moshiach? We are the weakest generation. The strength of our observance has decreased from generation to generation. The ability of Torah and mitzvos to sustain us seems depleted.

G-d answers **and promises** “I will command my blessing.” Let the Jewish people perform the work of the sixth year, the mitzvos of the time of exile. Let them act with self-sacrifice and a devotion

beyond reason and logic. Then G-d will give a blessing from Above; that which is sowed in the sixth year will be blessed threefold. Regardless of the weakness of the land – of the generation – its efforts will bring about revelation after revelation. The produce of the ‘sixth year’ will provide the spiritual sustenance for the seventh – the era of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 27:183-190)

Bechukosai

FROM ABOVE TO BELOW TO ABOVE

The last Torah portion of Vayikra, like the first, speaks of sacrifices. Here, the discussion centers on the first-born animal, which represents an arousal from Above, and the tithing of the tenth animal, which represents an arousal from below. Both are a necessary part of the process of transforming the world, preparing it for the times of Moshiach.

The inner connection between sections of the Torah can teach us much about our own connection with Redemption. This is logical, since the ultimate purpose and fulfillment of Torah is Moshiach. The Jewish people alone were given the Torah and it is our Divine mission to bring Moshiach, the era of Redemption when the whole world will be filled with knowledge of G-dliness. Indeed, the very question this raises, why our mitzvos are necessary to bring Moshiach, is addressed in the structure of Vayikra.

There is a well-known principle that the “end is linked to the beginning, and the beginning is attached to the end.” The portion of *Bechukosai* is the last portion of Vayikra, or *Leviticus* as it’s called in English. Thus, we should find a special connection between the end and the beginning both of the portion and of the book of Vayikra as a whole. As with every aspect of Torah, this connection reveals an important lesson in our Divine service of preparing the world for Moshiach.

There is an obvious connection between the beginning of Vayikra as a whole and its conclusion in the portion of *Bechukosai*. Both speak of sacrifices. Of course, there’s an immediate, superficial connection, since with the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Temple,