

# *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 Vayeishev, 5784  
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*of*  
*Redemption*

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,  
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by  
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

# Vayeishev

## A TZADDIK'S DISTRESS

*The sale of Joseph teaches that distress leads to greater tranquility. Tzaddikim desire the tranquility that comes with Moshiach. G-d desires the prayers of tzaddikim. We have suffered the distress; like Jacob, we must now pray for the time of tranquility that follows Redemption.*

The name of a particular Torah reading should tell us the general content of the whole portion. But in the case of this week's portion, *Vayeishev*, the name and the content seem to contradict each other. The word "*vayeishev*" indicates rest and quiet, the tranquility Jacob sought after his many years of struggling first with Esau and then with Lavan. Yet the Torah reading itself tells of the sale of Joseph, and Jacob's agitation and anxiety that followed. Indeed, the Sages explain this as cause and effect: Jacob sought to dwell in tranquility, so there occurred the upheaval concerning Joseph.

Jacob's desire – his request to rest after his trials and tribulations, to lead a quiet life – had the opposite effect, for as a result of the request G-d brought disturbance and disorder into his life. This sequence of events – a desire for repose becoming the direct cause for commotion and turmoil – applies not just to Jacob, but to *tzaddikim* in general, as the Sages explain. When the *tzaddikim* – the righteous – seek and desire to dwell in tranquility, G-d responds, what is prepared for them in the World to Come is not sufficient but they want to dwell in tranquility in this world, as well!

Since it is the *tzaddikim* – the righteous – who desire to dwell in tranquility, surely there is nothing wrong with such an aspiration.

Why then does G-d react negatively to this desire, so much so that he arouses the opposition, so to speak, bringing adversity and causing distress to the *tzaddikim*, as was the case with Jacob?

To understand G-d's complaint, as well as reconcile the apparent contradiction between the name of the Torah reading and its content, we first have to examine the nature of the *tzaddikim's* desire. For they seek to dwell in a tranquility that is perfect and complete, which means not simply physical repose, but a state of spiritual delight as well. In the World to Come, which the *tzaddikim* seek, there is neither eating, nor drinking, but only glorying in the Divine Presence.

Yet such tranquility belongs in the World to Come, not in this world. In the here and now, the task – especially of *tzaddikim* – is to work, to perform mitzvos, to accomplish our Divine service of transforming the physical realm into a dwelling place for G-dliness. It seems, then, that the request of the *tzaddikim* – to dwell in tranquility – is inappropriate, at least given the current situation.

However, there is a deeper reason *tzaddikim* seek tranquility in this world. They desire their Divine service – their mitzvos and Torah study here in the physical realm – to be perfect and complete. And that situation can occur only when the world is at rest, as in the days of Moshiach. As Maimonides writes: All Israel, the prophets and sages desired the days of Moshiach so the nations would leave them in peace, for the nations would not permit them to learn Torah or observe mitzvos properly. When Israel finds rest, it will increase in wisdom.

Nevertheless, achieving such a situation prior to the coming of Moshiach resembles receiving a reward that should come only after the task – the Divine service of transforming the world – has been completed. This is also why the troubles of Joseph overtook Jacob: his desire to dwell in tranquility was apparently not appropriate for his situation.

But it can't be said that Jacob did not deserve to dwell in tranquility and repose at all, for after the adversities that followed the sale of Joseph were overcome, Jacob's last seventeen years were peaceful and calm. That being the case, why it was necessary to bring new troubles and difficulties upon Jacob? Indeed, the adversity connected with Joseph was greater than the distress and affliction associated with Esau and Lavan.

Earlier we mentioned that the sale of Joseph and the resulting commotion resulted from Jacob's desire to dwell in tranquility. And we see that, in fact, Jacob ended up dwelling in tranquility. That is, in order to elevate Jacob to a level of Divine service high enough that the spiritual tranquility could be achieved in this world, Jacob first had to undergo a greater disturbance than previously experienced. For it is well known that adversity and distress refine and elevate a person to a higher level of Divine service.

This, by the way, answers the question concerning the name of the Torah reading: the disruption in Jacob's life caused by the sale of Joseph was only a preparation, the necessary means through which Jacob could truly dwell in tranquility, in the fullest sense.

Yet a question remains: surely Jacob, who embodies the attribute of truth, knew his situation. If he requested G-d to allow him to dwell in tranquility, it must be that, after all his previous trials and afflictions, he had in fact reached a level of Divine service where he deserved such a reward. Why, then, did he need to undergo the disturbance associated with Joseph to merit a proper repose?

Actually, Jacob had nine years of quiet and serenity after his return to Israel before the troubles with Joseph began. He had achieved a level of tranquility; but he did not dwell in the same type of tranquility before the sale of Joseph as he did after the family was reunited in Egypt.

On his own, Jacob achieved the highest level possible, where he and his family dwelled in tranquility, serving G-d and observing His commandments. Such a state was the natural result of his trials and efforts. But G-d gave him a tranquility beyond the natural – allowing Jacob to dwell in Egypt, metaphorically and actually a place of confusion, commotion and limitations. And precisely there G-d enabled Jacob to dwell in tranquility, both physically and spiritually. The locale did not affect the physical peace or the spiritual delight. In order to reach this level, however, Jacob had to undergo a greater trial and tribulation, an unnatural distress, as it were, that would raise his Divine service higher than he could achieve on his own.

Indeed, the adversity of Joseph differed from that of Lavan and Esau. With those two, Jacob was fighting the world's opposition to holiness, transforming the physical into the spiritual. The adversity of Joseph resulted in no such immediate or obvious spiritual triumph. It was simply a Divine decree, in order to elevate Jacob to a higher tranquility, beyond the limits of creation.

Since G-d wanted Jacob to reach this higher level of tranquility, why did he wait until Jacob asked before decreeing the sequence of events? Simply put, because G-d desires the prayers of *tzaddikim*. And from this we learn a critical lesson concerning our own Divine service: we must learn from the conduct of Jacob. We must seek and desire the Redemption. We must demand the arrival of Moshiach. Of course, in our times, we have already experienced the adversity and all aspects of distress. G-d wants the prayers of Israel; He wants us to desire the Redemption. And when we seek to dwell in tranquility as we should, then the hope and desire of all Israel – to see with our own eyes the return of the Divine Presence to Zion – will be immediately fulfilled.

*(Based on Likkutei Sichos 30, pp. 176-183)*

## BESURAS HAGEULO

### The Announcement Of The Redemption

#### 8

"These are the generations of Yaakov, Yoseph"<sup>1</sup> - The name Yoseph, which means "increase," alludes to the increase of the revelation and dissemination of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus by our Rebbes and leaders, successors of the Alter Rebbe, until my sainted father-in-law [Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchak], the leader of our generation, the "Yoseph" of our generation. His primary focus was the realization of the deeper sense of the name "Yoseph": "may G-d increase another son,"<sup>2</sup> that is, to take the "other,"<sup>3</sup> the "outsider," and transform him into an insider, a "son."<sup>4</sup> This goal of transforming the "outsider" into an "insider" became even more pronounced when he arrived in this lower<sup>5</sup> hemisphere (analogous to the descent of Joseph into Egypt). His arrival here facilitated the revelation of Chassidus (along with the dissemination of Torah and Judaism) to the entire world, even to the lowliest - the most spiritually remote - regions of the world.

In the forty years since his passing, we have experienced an increase in these efforts, an increase which finds expression in the verse, "paratzta alecha paretz," "you have broken through a

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1. *Vayeishev* 37:2.

2. *Vayeitzei* 30:24.

3. [*Because of the construction of the Hebrew sentence and the double meaning of the word "Acher" (both "another," in the sense of extra, and "other," in the sense of stranger), the phrase may be read in two ways: 1) "May G-d add (increase)for me another son," meaning, give me another son; 2) "May G-d add (increase) for me a son - an other (stranger)," meaning, make the stranger my son. Translator's note.*]

4. *Or HaTorah* loc cit.

5. [*A reference to the Western Hemisphere which in relation to the Eastern Hemisphere, where the revelation at Mount Sinai occurred, is considered lower. Translator's note.*]



breach."<sup>6</sup> Our sages teach that after forty years one has the capacity to "fathom the mind of one's teacher,"<sup>7</sup> that then one can acquire "a heart to know, eyes to see and ears to hear"<sup>8</sup> the teachings learned forty years earlier. Similarly, the "dissemination of the fountains of Chassidus to the outside" followed the Biblical description of "and you shall spread forth to the west and east, north and south,"<sup>9</sup> reaching even the most remote corners of the globe, breaking all the barriers. Therefore, as both the forty-year barrier to understanding and the barriers to the "dissemination of the fountains of Chassidus" have been breached, we are already prepared for the coming of our righteous Moshiach. Significantly, Moshiach is identified with Peretz,<sup>10</sup> as our sages comment: "Peretz, this is Moshiach, as it says:<sup>11</sup> "The breacher [HaPoreitz] had arisen before them."<sup>12</sup>

\* \* \*

On Yud-Tes Kislev of this year, 192 years will have elapsed since the liberation of the first Yud-Tes Kislev (5559-5751).<sup>13</sup> The significance of the number 192 is that:

a) Rearranged, the Hebrew letters for 192 (קצב) form the word (קבץ) (collecting or gathering). This suggests that we have now

6. *Vayeishev* 38:29.

7. *Avodah Zarah* 5, beginning of side b.

8. *Tavo* 29:3.

9. *Vayeitzei* 28:14.

10. [*Peretz was a son of Judah. His name means "breach." Translator's note.*]

11. *Micha* 2:13.

12. *Agadas Bereishis end of ch. 63. See also Bereishis Rabbah, end of ch. 85 (and Rashi there): "this one who is greater than all the leaders will arise from you (that is, Moshiach, concerning whom it is said:) "the breacher arose before them."*

13. [*The anniversary of the liberation of R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad. Translator's note.*]

concluded<sup>14</sup> the service of the era of Exile, namely, the process of collecting and gathering the Divine sparks of the entire world (for which purpose G-d exiled Israel among the nations). (This includes collecting and gathering all the variations, represented by the phrase "kabetz-shanah" - for the word "shanah," (year) is cognate to the word "shinuy," (change) i.e., all the possible changes and variations of [divine sparks]).<sup>15</sup>

b) The Hebrew letters for the word 192, קצב, derive from the term "fixed time" or "cut off." This implies that the time for the dissemination of the fountains to the far reaches (as well as the spiritual achievements during this time), which commenced Yud-Tes Kislev 192 years ago, has finally reached the "cut off" period, at last been completed. Therefore we are ready for the realization of the promise that when the fountain [of Chassidus] will be disseminated to the farthest reaches, the master, the King Moshiach, will come.

This is one of the reasons for the publication of a special (and enlarged) edition of the Tanya (the "written Torah"<sup>16</sup> of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus) and its distribution to everyone present, men, women and children, in conjunction with the "festival of Liberation of Yud-Tes Kislev - 192nd year"<sup>17</sup> - to emphasize, in a concrete manner, one visible to even eyes of flesh, the completion of the service of disseminating the fountains to the farthest reaches

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14. "kabetz" is in the past tense, and not "kovetz" (with an additional "vov" [the number six], which is in the present tense (implying that it could continue for another six months).

15. *Avodas HaKodesh vol. IV*, ch. 19. *Or HaTorah, Mikeitz*, 338, end of side b, and in other sources.

16. See *Igros Kodesh of Admor Maharayatz, vol. IV*, p. 261 ff. See there for cross references.

17. Text taken from title page of [this edition] of the *Tanya*.

during these 192 years. This completion leads to the "end of days"<sup>18</sup> (that is, the end of exile), which also implies the realization of another "end of days,"<sup>19</sup> that is, the deadline for and the beginning of Redemption.<sup>20</sup>

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev, 21 Kislev, 5751)*

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18. See *Zohar* 1:54, end of side a. Beginning of *Parshas Mikeitz*. *Eicha Rabba* 2:6 - cited and elucidated in *Or HaTorah*, beginning of *Parshas Mikeitz*.

19. [The word for "days" in Hebrew can be spelled with either a "mem" or a "nun": "Yamim" or "Yamin". The former, "Yamim," is connected to the left, the end of exile and removal of the negative. The former, "Yamin," is a phrase from the end of the Book of Daniel, connoting the right, and the revelation of the positive. See the sources in note 14 for elaboration. Translator's note.]

20. [The first "end of days" refers to the "end of the negative forces identified with the left" and leads immediately and automatically to a second, positive "end of days," the Redemption itself. Translator's note.]

## 53

It has been said many time of late, especially in the last few months, that according to all the signs our generation is the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption. Since all aspects of Divine service have already been completed, we stand now ready for the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, as an imminent and immediate reality.

...According to what was said above (and has been stated many times), that according to all the signs all necessary spiritual refinements have been accomplished, it's obvious why we are now ready for the Redemption.

\* \* \*

**Further, and this is essential:** Recognition, acknowledgment and praising G-d for the miracles He performs, in addition to the concept of expressing gratitude, is relevant to **the coming of our righteous Moshiach in the true and complete Redemption**. For as the Gemara states:<sup>1</sup> G-d desired to make Chizkiyahu Moshiach... the attribute of Divine Justice said to G-d... Chizkiyahu for whom you did all these miracles (who was saved from Sancheriv and healed of his illness<sup>2</sup>) and didn't sing praises to You, You want to make him Moshiach?"

Obviously, in our context, publicizing the miracles which G-d has done in our times is relevant to bringing the true and complete Redemption in actual reality!

From this we can derive an essential lesson:

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1. *Sanhedrin* 94:a.
  2. Rashi's commentary there.

Since we are already after all the requirements and the Redemption still has not yet come - it is most appropriate to be involved with "publicizing the miracle," to publicize to one's self and to others, and indeed everywhere, the miracles which G-d does for us, knowing this is connected with the true and complete Redemption!

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev, 23 Kislev,  
Blessing of the Month Teves 5752)*

## 54

What was said previously is of particular relevance for our period, in which the hope and the "I believe every day that he will come" should be with greater strength and greater vigor, until we can physically see the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

\* \* \*

The mitzvah that possesses a unique merit to hasten the Redemption is the mitzvah of tzedekah - "great is tzedekah for it hastens the Redemption."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore it's clear that one should increase in the mitzvah of tzedekah. It's preferable if the increase in tzedekah occurs immediately, so that the Redemption (which comes through the mitzvah of tzedekah) should also come immediately.

Especially since "there is none... among us who knows how long,"<sup>2</sup> it may be that the only thing lacking to bring the Redemption is nothing more than the giving of several coins to tzedekah!...

As the Rambam expresses<sup>3</sup> it in the form of a final legal decision: "every individual must see himself... and also the whole world as half meritorious and half liable... by doing one mitzvah he and the whole world together will be inclined to the side of merit, and bring about for himself and everyone salvation and deliverance." That is, the action of a single individual, adult or child, that gives a single penny to tzedekah, brings for himself and

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1. *Bava Basra* 10a. See *Tanya* Chapter 37.

2. *Tehillim* 74:9.

3. *Hilchos Teshuvah*, chapter 3, halacha 4.

the whole world the "salvation and deliverance" of the true and complete Redemption.

*(From the talk of the First Light of Chanukah 5752 -  
during the world-wide "publicizing the miracle")*

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**  
Mrs. **Roneete Mona Mina** bas Reb **Zev** ע"ה **Kurtzman**  
Passed away on 9 Cheshvan, 5783

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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