

Reflections of Redemption

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

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 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

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 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
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by
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

Kedoshim

REMOVING G-D'S FIERCE ANGER

Theft is compared to idolatry. G-d's fierce anger remains as long as there are wicked people – thieves. Idolatry also angers G-d. All other sins can be corrected by a positive action, restoring the original situation. Theft requires more; it requires teshuvah.

This week's Torah reading contains one of the two admonitions against stealing. As our Sages explain, in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not steal" means kidnapping. In this week's Torah reading, "Thou shalt not steal" prohibits the theft of money.

Regarding such theft, our Sages declare that stealing is comparable to idolatry. A thief is like an idol-worshipper. When the Sages use such an expression, it's not just a metaphor to indicate the seriousness and severity of the transgression. Rather, it indicates a similarity between the essential nature of such a violation and that of idolatry.

Why, of all transgressions, is monetary theft akin to idolatry? What unique feature do they share? The question has a practical urgency: when Moshiach comes, all forms of idolatry will be removed. Indeed, removal of idolatry is a prerequisite for Redemption, as we acknowledge thrice-daily in the Aleinu prayer: ". . . therefore we hope to You, L-rd our G-d, that we may speedily behold the splendor of Your might, to banish idolatry from the earth – and false gods will be utterly destroyed . . . Then all the inhabitants of the world will recognize and know that every knee should bend to You . . . and they will all take upon themselves the yoke of Your kingdom . . . And it is said: The L-rd shall be King over the entire earth; on that day the L-rd shall be One and His Name One."

Of course, when Moshiach comes thievery and other such activities will also cease. In a general sense, this is understandable, since every transgression is a violation of G-d's Will, and thus idolatry in miniature. In the era of Redemption, when "all eyes will see" and "the whole world will be filled with knowledge of G-d," fulfilling G-d's commandments will be the automatic and natural thing to do. Recognizing and feeling G-d's presence will prevent such violations.

Idolatry is the paradigm, the beginning of all transgressions. In a sense, all others are simply parts, greater or lesser segments of idolatry. At this level, every moment we **don't** violate a commandment, we destroy a little piece of idolatry, and thus bring Moshiach closer. By negating the negative, so to speak, we bring the positive: by not stealing, we reveal G-dliness.

Still, since the Sages declared there to be a direct correspondence, there must be a special connection between theft and idolatry. Stealing, an act between one person and another, parallels idolatry, an act between man and G-d. This point of comparison, this essential aspect that theft and idolatry share, emerges from the prohibition to steal from a condemned idolatrous city: When an entire city is enticed into idolatry, Torah commands that the inhabitants be killed and its contents burned. Since there might be a temptation to save some of the valuables, the Torah warns us not to take anything belonging to the condemned city. Even though the death penalty applies to the inhabitants, their possessions are not like lost objects.

Here, the prohibition against stealing is very specific: one may not take any object from a city condemned for idolatry. One might think that such objects are ownerless, and thus free. But the Torah ordained differently: all the items of a condemned city are prohibited. Since we are prohibited to take them, taking them would be stealing.

The Sages also provide a reason: such a theft keeps G-d's "fierce anger" in the world. "As long as there are wicked people in the world, there is fierce anger in the world." The wicked people referred to cannot be the idolaters themselves, since they have already been killed. Rather, the wicked are those who would take the possessions of the idolaters, the contraband of the condemned city. Thus, the Sages conclude, "When the wicked are removed from the world, G-d's fierce anger is removed from the world. Who are these wicked? Thieves."

We now have the following correspondence: just as idolatry inhibits Redemption, so stealing, specifically from an idolatrous city, inhibits the removal of G-d's fierce anger from the world. On the other side, just as removing idolatry is a prerequisite for Redemption, as we acknowledge in the Aleinu prayer, so too, removing the wicked – the thieves – is the prerequisite for removal of G-d's fierce anger. (Obviously, only the severest transgression brings G-d's "fierce anger" into the world in the first place. The greatest sin against G-d is idolatry. Idolatry arouses G-d's fierce anger, but stealing keeps it in existence, preventing Redemption.)

What differentiates stealing from other sins? Generally, a sin exists only as long as a person is sinning. For example a person who eats non-kosher food violates the laws of kashrus only while he is eating. When he's not eating treif, he's not violating a commandment. Similarly, a person who hits someone else has transgressed only at the moment he strikes the other person. But so long as a stolen object has not been returned, the thief is still and continuously stealing. Once the stolen object is returned, the thief no longer transgresses. From then on, the individual no longer violates the prohibition. *But he has not retroactively repaired the past.* That requires *teshuvah*.

In most cases, the sin has a limited lifespan, so to speak. When

one stops violating the mitzvah, the sin ceases to exist. Therefore, G-d's anger ceases when the transgression ceases. With most transgressions, G-d's anger depends on the action, stopping when the sinful action stops. True, from the moment of the violation, the individual is obligated to do *teshuvah*. But the sin itself, having ceased to be, has no lingering effect on the world.

But theft, like idolatry, is different. Even when one stops acting in a sinful manner, the sin continues to exist. A thief's resolve to never steal again, by itself, does not remove or correct the sin itself. As long as he does not do *teshuvah*, G-d's fierce anger remains in the world. Similarly, one does not have to be worshipping idols every moment of the day to provoke G-d's fierce anger. That idolatry exists, that one in fact worships idols, even if that isn't happening right now, is sufficient to arouse G-d's fierce anger. The effect of theft or idolatry continues even when the individual is no longer stealing or worshipping idols. G-d's fierce anger remains so long as the wicked remain. And there's only one way to remove or transform the wicked: *teshuvah*.

What is true about theft is also true in a more limited sense about every transgression: until we do *teshuvah*, G-d's displeasure persists. With every sin comes the imperative to do *teshuvah*. As important as *teshuvah* is in general, it becomes ultimately significant in bringing Moshiach; as the Rambam rules, the Jewish people will eventually do *teshuvah* and immediately they will be redeemed. When considering other transgressions, a person may reason that, since he will definitely do *teshuvah* anyway, it's acceptable to delay it. The delay may seem especially justified if one becomes involved in other good things.

Or, one can resolve to do something good, a mitzvah. But there's no urgency to fulfill the resolution; we may become busy with other interests. However, since delaying *teshuvah* sustains G-d's "anger"

in the world, such conduct is improper. G-d's displeasure stays beyond the moment of transgression; it remains continuously; delay affects not just the individual, but the entire world.

Our *teshuvah* becomes responsible for removing G-d's displeasure and transforming the world. Doing good benefits not only the individual, but the entire world. And once one does *teshuvah*, its effect also continues onward. Everything depends on our actions. We, through our *teshuvah* and positive actions, can bring the ultimate Redemption one moment sooner.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 17:205-214)

The Announcement Of The Redemption

19

"As in the days of your going forth from Egypt I will show him miracles."¹

Everyone can clearly see how the miracles of the Exodus from Egypt are reflected now in the victory of these days - both in the substance of the victory and in the time when it came, specifically - in the auspicious days of the month of Nissan.

...Still before the holiday of Pesach - was the "striking of Egypt through their firstborn."² That is, the "first born" of the nations of the world³ (including the country of Egypt and her neighboring Arab countries) - according to the resolution of their representatives in the "United Nations" - waged war and struck "Mitzrayim" [Egypt], an enemy of the Jews. The name "Mitzrayim" comes from the word for⁴ an "oppressor" of Israel, G-d forbid.

And on the day of Purim this year - "a year when I will show him wonders" - was the victory (as the nations of the world announced) and his downfall, in a manner of "to strike," etc., (not "to kill") and specifically through non-Jews ("their first born") who reprimanded and humiliated him, forcing him to regret his actions until then.

He was forced to acknowledge and accept and fulfill all the

1. *Michah* 7:15

2. *Tehillim* (Psalms) 136:10. And see *Midrash Tehillim* there. *Rashi and Metzudos Dovid* there.

3. And all the kingdoms are designated by the name *Mitzrayim* (*Bereishis Rabba* chapter 16:4).

4. *Bereishis Rabba* there.

commands, instructions and requirements that were given to him by "their first born": to free some of the prisoners of war and also to comply with the other things they demanded of him.

And afterwards, the continuation was - in the month of Nissan, and within it - in the days of Pesach, "the time of our freedom" - that their "first born" in the United Nations prolonged his censure and disgrace.

During the days of Purim and immediately afterwards it still wasn't known what the continuation would be, how far he would be shamed and penalized, how strong he would remain, how much he would have to acknowledge and repay, and if he would accept all this or if it would be done through others. Afterwards, in the days of the month of Nissan, in the days of Pesach - their "first born" came out with a strong reprimand, a conclusive resolution and strong demands (in addition to the previous instructions) how Saddam should conduct himself, and also, to show and assure he would fulfill them: he should free the captives, return what he took, and pay for the losses and damages that he had caused until now (and also for what he did earlier).

And in the course of the month, through the last days of the month, the miracle increased even further - that he agreed to everything without any resistance or war, until he revealed money and property which he had hidden (and until now it wasn't known he had).

...Another example of the events of these final times in which we see wonders and miracles - is the exodus of many Jews from that country,⁵ which is like the Exodus from Egypt:

After many years of a completely opposite manner of conduct,

5. *[That is, Russia. Translator's note.]*

in which Jews were not allowed to leave - specifically in this year and in the previous year did the country open its gates to let out the Jews [so that] they should go to the Holy Land (and even if, for whatever reason there may be, some of them are detained in another country for a short while (in the United States or Australia, etc.) soon they will move (with a complete desire and with joy and a glad heart) to the Holy Land, together with their families).

And the miracle has increased until the country itself assists them to leave, as was the case in the Exodus from Egypt, whose goal was to go to the Holy Land (And I shall bring you to the land, etc.⁶). This miracle also includes assistance from the treasures of "Egypt" (as mentioned above); these treasures have been used to such an extent that a portion of them - and also money from other nations - comes to the Jewish people, our brothers the children of Israel who just went out (and are going out now), in the "exodus from Mitzrayim." Their departure from "Mitzrayim" (a name derived from the word for distress and confinement⁷), from that country is similar to how it was in the Exodus from Egypt the first time, for then "they despoiled Egypt,"⁸ until even what they didn't ask for they gave them,⁹ including treasured items.¹⁰

...And may it be His will that G-d should help every Jew that he should have "eyes to see and (automatically) ears to hear," and "a heart to know,"¹¹ to see "the great trials that **your eyes** saw, the signs and those great wonders,"¹² the revealed miracles that occur every day.

6. *Vaeira* 6:8.

7. See *Torah Or*, *Vaeira* 57:2 and further. *Beshallah* 64:1-2. *Yisro* 71:3 and further. And in many places.

8. *Bo* 12:36.

9. The explanation of *Rashi* there, from the *Mechilta* on the verse.

10. See *Shmos Rabba* chapter 14:3. And other sources.

11. *Tavo* 29:3.

12. *Ibid*, 2.

Particularly since we have already been more than "forty years,"¹³ in the desert of the nations (of exile), in a situation of "(forty years) I quarreled with the generation,"¹⁴ and we are ready to come to "they shall enter my resting place,"¹⁵ in the Holy Land and Jerusalem,¹⁶ to the extent of Shalem, a complete rest - with the true and complete Redemption.

It is understood that the Jewish people are already prepared and already have "a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear" (just as it was in the fortieth year after the exodus from Egypt, and that as in the days of your going forth from the land of Egypt I will show him miracles).

(From the talk of Tuesday evening, Parshas Shimini, 26 Nissan 5751)

13. It should be noted that forty years have passed since the departure of His Honored Holiness, My sainted father-in-law, the Rebbe, in the year 5710, as mentioned many times.

14. *Tehillim* (Psalms) 95:10.

15. *Ibid*, 11.

16. The explanation of *Rashi* there.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Mrs. Roneete Mona Mina bas **Reb Zev** ע"ה **Kurtzman**

Passed away on 9 Cheshvan, 5783

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