

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** ה"י
Shagalov
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AND IN HONOR OF
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by
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

Haazinu

ON THAT SELFSAME DAY

Demanding Moshiach seems to be a refusal to accept G-d's decree. A similar question arises in this week's Torah reading. G-d tells Moses to ascend the mountain b'etzem hayom hazeh – on that selfsame day – when he will die. This phrase – b'etzem hayom hazeh – occurs two other times in the Torah, once in connection with Noah and once in connection with the Exodus. According to Rashi it indicates an attempt to prevent an event. There is a difference between the wicked trying to prevent Noah's entrance to the ark and the exodus of the Jewish people, on the one hand, and the righteous trying to prevent the death of Moses on the other. By defying G-d's Will, so to speak, the Jewish people expressed their gratitude to Moses, according to Jewish law. The actions of Moses continued to benefit the Jewish people until that very day. The people actually did have the potential to prevent the death of Moses. Going through exile allows us to fulfill that potential.

One of the central questions regarding the coming of Moshiach concerns our role in bringing the Redemption. The Rebbe has explained the importance of demanding Moshiach. We should not simply ask for the Redemption. We should **insist** that G-d send the Redeemer. It's one thing to declare our faith in the coming of Moshiach, to state we will await his arrival, even eagerly anticipate it, despite all the delays. It's another to persistently and incessantly urge, entreat and demand Moshiach. This is more than pouring out our hearts, crying out from the midst of troubles and difficulties. We are attempting to require G-d to give us what we want, what He promised: **We Want Moshiach Now!**

But by what right do we make such a demand? G-d will surely send Moshiach – but in His time. How dare we try to force G-d's

Hand, so to speak? Singing “We Want Moshiach Now” is not like prayer, when we present our request before G-d. Singing “We Want Moshiach Now” seems to be almost an act of defiance, a refusal to accept G-d’s decree. When we insist that Moshiach should come immediately, aren’t we opposing and challenging G-d’s Will?

This same question arises at the end of this week’s Torah reading. There it states: “And the L-rd spoke unto Moses *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* – on that selfsame day – saying, ‘Go up into this mountain of Avarim, mount Nevo . . . Behold the land of Canaan which I give to the children of Israel for a possession. And die in the mountain which you will ascend . . .’”

The apparently superfluous phrase *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* – on that selfsame day – occurs in two earlier passages of the Torah. One concerns Noah’s entry to the ark, the other the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. The people of Noah’s generation said that if they noticed Noah entering the ark, they would not permit him to enter and would destroy the ark. Similarly, the Egyptians declared that if they noticed the Jewish people trying to leave, they would take weapons of war and kill the children of Israel. In both cases, G-d responds, “I will cause this to happen (Noah’s entrance to the ark and the Exodus from Egypt) *‘b’etzem hayom hazeh’* – in the middle of the day. Let anyone with the power to stop it, let him come and stop it.”

Thus, as Rashi points out, the phrase *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* must have a similar meaning in this context. Hearing that Moses is about to die, the Jewish people protest. “If we notice him about to ascend the mountain, we will not permit him. The man who brought us out of Egypt, split the sea, caused the manna to descend, brought quails, raised the well, who did all this for us and gave us the Torah – we will not permit him to leave us.” Here, too, G-d says, *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* – in the middle of the day, in the sight of all, Moses will ascend.

The parallel to our own situation is obvious. Moses was the first redeemer and he will be the last redeemer. That is, the soul of Moses will enclothe itself in the soul of Moshiach; there is a spark of Moses in Moshiach. Indeed, there is a spark of Moses within every Jew in general, and within the leader of the generation in particular. When the leader of our generation, the Moses of our generation, tells us we are the last generation of exile and the first of redemption, then we parallel the generation Moses led out of Egypt, which was the last of exile and the first of redemption for its time. Of the leader, the Moses of our generation, we have said, in effect, we will not permit him to ascend. We insist he lead us into the time of Redemption, as the generation of the Wilderness demanded Moses lead them into Israel.

In the case of Moses – the leader and redeemer – the Moshiach of his generation, the whole concept seems problematic. In the first two instances, the people of Noah's generation and the Egyptians were a majority. This majority opposition felt, mistakenly, that Noah in his time, and the Jewish people in theirs, could be stopped by sheer force of numbers. They could think, wrongly, that their physical and numerical superiority could stop someone else, or a group, from doing something. But in the case of Moses, how could the children of Israel prevent the death of Moses, an event entirely in G-d's Hand? Further, the Egyptians and people of Noah's generation were wicked. We would expect them to protest and defy G-d's Will. But how can the Jewish people challenge G-d's Will?

Nevertheless, the term "*b'etzem hayom hazeh*" clearly indicates an opposition to G-d's Will. So even here, when the children of Israel are about to enter the land, and the entire generation is devoted to fulfilling G-d's commandments, the phrase "*b'etzem hayom hazeh*" indicates an opposition to G-d's Will. They wish to prevent the ascent and death of Moses.

The Jewish people reasoned as follows: they had just learned, in regard to the first fruits, the law of expressing gratitude. There is an obligation to do all in one's power to thank a benefactor. When G-d blesses them with a bountiful harvest, they must bring the first fruits. Similarly, given all that Moses did for the Jewish people, they had a duty to express their gratitude. Not only did they owe Moses for his past actions; the things Moses did – taking them out of Egypt, splitting the sea, bringing the manna and the quails, raising the well, and giving the Torah – continued to benefit the Jewish people until that very day. Allowing Moses to leave them, after all he had done, when they were on the edge of the land of Israel, would certainly be a denial of blessings and beneficence.

But hadn't G-d commanded otherwise?

However, the command was directed **only** to Moses. The Jewish people weren't commanded to ascend the mountain; only Moses was. To the contrary, by preventing the departure of Moses, the Jewish people were also fulfilling a Divine commandment – to acknowledge benevolence. Accordingly, the death of Moses was conditional: **he** was commanded to ascend, but the people had the option and opportunity to prevent it.

In other words, although there was a decree that Moses should die, because this decree affected the community, the protest of the community could annul it. In truth, the Jewish people **did** have the power to nullify the decree – just as the prayers of Moses himself had earlier altered decrees against the Jewish people.

If so, why didn't the efforts of the Jewish people succeed in regard to Moses? Because paradoxically, success would have destroyed them. How so? Our Sages tell us that everything Moses did is permanent and eternal. Everything Moses made endures. If Moses had brought the Jewish people into the land of Israel, their entry would have been an achievement of Moses. As such,

it could never have been reversed. Thus, when the Jews sinned, they could not have been driven out of Israel. Exile would not have been possible. The only punishment left would have been for them to be destroyed. Had Moses led the Jewish people into the land, a later exile would not be possible. The presence of Moses in the land of Israel would mean the people could not be exiled, and the only available punishment would be destruction.

Today, there is this difference: having already suffered the punishment of exile, nothing prevents us from exerting ourselves in Divine service. We have a right and a responsibility to remove every obstacle that conceals or obscures the Redemption. We have the power to nullify the decree withholding Moshiach. To fulfill our obligation, we must demand “We Want Moshiach Now” and do all in our power to reveal the Moses, the Moshiach within ourselves. In this way we bring about the Redemption and the revelation of Moshiach, the Moses of our generation.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 19, pp. 339-347)

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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With respect to Gideon, we find that: "In his days¹ the Jewish people were in distress. The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought a person who would find merit in them. When He found Gideon to be meritorious, because he found merit in them, an angel immediately appeared to him, as it says: "And the angel of G-d appeared to him and said to him, 'Go with this power, with **the power of the merit you have found in my children.**" "Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, it is within your capacity to find a defense for Israel. **In your merit they shall be redeemed.**"²

...The merit which will hasten the Redemption is the following:

Even in the Talmudic era it has been said that "all the deadlines have passed."³ Certainly now that we have endured a lengthy and arduous exile, the duration of which has exceeded 1,900 years, **and he has still not arrived...** And in regard to Teshuvah ("It depends only on Teshuvah³) [repentance, return, a prerequisite for Redemption], they have already done Teshuvah. Indeed, there is no Jewish person who has not entertained a thought of Teshuvah, (not just once, but) several times in the course of his lifetime. This [thought of Teshuvah] can transform "instantaneously"⁴ a perfectly wicked person into a perfectly righteous individual, in accordance with the Talmudic ruling⁵ that one who would betroth a woman "stipulating that I am a (perfectly⁶) righteous individual, even if he

1. *Tanchuma, Shoftim* 4.

2. *Yalkut Shimoni, Shoftim* 62.

3. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

4. *Zohar* I, 129, end side a.

5. *Kiddushin* 49b. Rambam, *Hilchos Ishus*, 8:5. *Tur, Shulchan Aruch, Even HoEzer*, 38:31.

6. Based on the version cited on *Or Zarua* 112.

were previously a perfectly wicked person, she is betrothed, for perhaps he had a thought of teshuvah."

Considering the above, it is with utmost certainty that our righteous Moshiach must arrive **here and now, immediately, [mamosh] in the most literal sense.**

Now, this exercise of finding merit⁷ in and of itself should suffice to bring about the Redemption. Moreover, in addition to the finding of merit, the imminence of Moshiach's arrival constitutes a **definitive ruling issued by many rabbis and halachic authorities.** Further, since Torah "is not in heaven,"⁸ this ruling issued by the earthly courts "obligates," so to speak, and affords a unique privilege to, the heavenly courts. **And so it will be confirmed!**

* * *

In our day and age, after G-d has vented His rage with the destruction of the Holy Temple, and after all of "our deeds and actions throughout the duration of exile,"⁹ and after all the decrees of oppression and persecution - may Hashem, indeed, shield us and protect us from them - the Jewish people have endured throughout the protracted and arduous final exile, particularly the Holocaust of the very last generation, the process of refinement and purification has, without any doubt, been achieved in full, "enough and even too much." Consequently, the [current¹⁰] "siege of the Babylonian

7. [i.e., that we have already passed all the deadlines as well as satisfying the condition of Teshuvah. Translator's note.]

8. Netzavim, 30:12. See Bava Metzia 59b.

9. Tanya, beginning of chapter 37.

10. [The Hebrew term Samach, which means "besieged," can also be rendered "supported." This talk was delivered on the fast day Asara b'Teves (the Tenth of the month of Teves), the anniversary of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king. The Rebbe here is alluding to the threats of the modern day Babylonian dictator, which are actually the events which serve as preludes to the Redemption. Translator's note.]

king"¹¹ has acquired an exclusively **positive** connotation, one that is **visibly and manifestly good, even to eyes of flesh**. In the words of our sages:¹² The Holy One Blessed be He says to Israel, "My children have no fear. All that I have done¹³ I have done exclusively for you... the time of your Redemption has arrived."

The emphasis of this generation - particularly this year, the year designated as "It shall be a year of wonders I will show him" - should be placed on the concept of G-d's support of those who have fallen,¹⁴ to strengthen and encourage the Jewish people, emphasizing particularly the support and encouragement acquired through faith in the coming of Moshiach and the implicit trust that "behold he (our righteous Moshiach) is coming."¹⁵ This should be accompanied with enhanced preparation for his arrival by way of teshuvah [repentance, return] and observance of Torah and mitzvos. In the words of the pronouncement of my sainted father-in-law - the leader of our generation: "immediate Teshuvah, immediate Redemption."¹⁶ "Return, O, Israel, unto G-d your G-d; prepare yourselves and your family to greet our righteous Moshiach, who shall arrive soon, in the most literal sense."¹⁷

*(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Vayeichi
(and Asara b'Teves, may it be transformed into joy) 5751)*

11. *Yechezkal* 24:2.

12. *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Yeshayahu* 499.

13. This includes the efforts of the Babylonian King, who is merely an ax in the hands of the one who chops with it. [i.e. He is G-d's instrument.]

14. [The phrase סומך נופלים - "supports the falling" - is similar to the expression mentioned before - מלך בבל - "the Babylonian King besieged," which the Rebbe interpreted in a positive vein to mean that "he supported." Translator's note.]

15. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8. See *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse (2:8(b)).

16. In his *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 5, end of p. 361 ff., 377 ff., 408 ff. and in other places.

17. *Hayom Yom* - 15 Teves.

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All of the signs mentioned by our sages indicate that we are currently situated **at the very end of the period of exile**. We have "passed all the deadlines."¹ We have also performed Teshuvah [repentance, return, a prerequisite for Redemption]. Indeed, my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, declared (several decades ago) that we have already concluded all the service [necessary for Redemption], including the "polishing of the buttons,"² and we now stand ready ("All of you stand ready") to greet our righteous Moshiach.³

* * *

Despite the difficult and protracted final exile, which has lasted more than 1,900 years (in stark contrast to the duration of the Egyptian bondage which lasted 210 years), the nature of "the Children of **Israel**" has essentially **transcended exile**. Thus, every additional moment we remain in exile is a form "having **now come** into Egypt,"⁴ "as if they had that very day entered into Egypt."⁵

The Jewish people, therefore, stand with firm faith and conviction that G-d will immediately fulfill his promise that "I have indeed remembered you"⁶ by bringing the genuine and complete Redemption, especially when hearing from the Moses of our generation,⁷ my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, that we have already concluded all matters of Divine service and

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. Talk of Simchas Torah, 5689.

3. Cf. *Hayom Yom*, among others, 15 Teves.

4. *Shemos* 1:1.

5. *Shemos Rabbah*, beginning of our Parsha (8:14), *Tanchuma*, loc. cit. 3.

6. *Shemos* 3:16.

7. See *Bereishis Rabbah* 56:7: "There is no generation in which there is none

are presently standing ready to greet our righteous Redeemer [Moshiach]. This is particularly true now that we have reached the milestone of forty years⁸ concerning which the Torah says, "G-d gave you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."⁹ Additionally, we are now situated in the fifty first year [5751], which in Hebrew forms the acrostic (It shall be a year of) wonders which I will show him [נפלאות אראנו - Niflaos Arenu].

The Jewish people should, therefore, be encouraged and their spirits uplifted by declaring that G-d says daily, and literally, anew, that, **"I have indeed remembered you,"** and that your righteous Moshiach "stands behind the wall"¹⁰ and that "this one is coming."¹¹ Accordingly we should prepare ourselves to greet him by increasing our observance of Torah and Mitzvos, **in consonance with the ruling of the Rambam**¹² (whose anniversary of passing is the 20th of Teves, the night after this Sabbath), that through "one Mitzvah, one can favorably alter the balance for oneself and for the entire world, causing oneself and them salvation and deliverance."

(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Shemos, 19 Teves 5751)

like Moses." See also Zohar 3:273a. Tikkunei Zohar 69 (112, beginning of side a. 114, beginning of side a). Tanya chapter 44. Ibid. Iggeres HaKodesh, elucidation of sec. 27, end.

8. [I.e., forty years since the passing of the Previous Rebbe, a milestone which enables us to fully realize the intention and depth of the teachings that were said forty years earlier. - Translator's note.]

9. Tavo 29:3 [Moses said this to the Jewish people who were about to enter into the Promised Land, explaining that they were now capable of realizing that which they were taught by G-d forty years earlier. Translator's note.]

10. Shir HaShirim 2:9.

11. Ibid 8. See Shir HaShirim Rabbah on this verse (ch. 2:8(b)).

12. Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4.

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Our generation is the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption, as proclaimed and announced by my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, the Yosef of our generation (named after the first Yosef who proclaimed and announced that "G-d will surely remember you and bring you up from this land to the land that was sworn to Avraham, to Yitzchak and the Yaakov"¹). For all our deeds and Divine service have already been completed, all appointed times have already passed, teshuvah has already been done, and all the preparations have already been finished In a manner of "great preparation," all is ready for the festive meal² of the time to come, Livyosan, Shor Habor³ and Yayin Meshumar.⁴

(From the talk of the 10th of Teves (may it be transformed into rejoicing), and Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, 14 Teves 5752)

1. Our Parsha 50:24.

2. Based on the expression of our Sages, of blessed memory - Avos, chapter 3, Mishneh 16. Sanhedrin 38a and Rashi's commentary.

3. See *Bava Basra* 75a. And *Vayikra Rabba* chapter 13:3.

4. *Brochos* 34:b. See there for cross references.

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We have already mentioned many times the words of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, that aside from the fact that already "all the appointed times have passed,"¹ the Jewish people have already done teshuvah and already everything is completed, even including "polishing the buttons." We only need G-d to open the eyes of the Jewish people so that they should see that the true and complete Redemption already exists, and we are sitting already by the prepared table at the festive meal of Livyosan, Shor HaBor,² etc.

Therefore it's understood... in this generation and at this time, after every requirement has been accomplished (as mentioned above), one has the complete assurance in the Torah that there will certainly be "(You will remember the day of your exodus from the land of Egypt) all the days of your life... to bring about the days of Moshiach."³

There is no need for any interruption, G-d Forbid, between "all the days of your life" and "the days of Moshiach" (which has been the situation for the Jewish people in all the generations **before** our generation). Rather, "all the days of your life" for every Jew, living physically as a soul in a body, includes in the simple sense (also) "the days of Moshiach." This is without an interruption, since the Redemption is actually coming imminently and immediately at this instant and in this place (even if the condition is one of night, "coming to Egypt"). Thus the last moment of exile and the very last instant of exile become the first moment and the very first instant of Redemption.

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. See *Bava Basra* 74b ff. *Pesachim* 119b and in other places.

3. *Brochos* 12b.

And from "the days of your life" at this time and in this place, without any interruption whatsoever, G-d Forbid, (even if he is already older than seventy years, etc.) every Jew will go immediately - totally and completely, "Reuven and Shimon descended, Reuven and Shimon arose,"⁴ - into the continuation of "all the days of your life.," into the days of Moshiach and the eternal life that then will be.

Practically, this means that the Divine service of the Jewish people now must be "to bring about the days of Moshiach." We must reveal that the situation of "coming to Egypt" in exile is in truth a situation of the "Redemption of Israel." [This is achieved] through his preparation of himself and others for the situation of "the days of Moshiach."

The above includes (particularly in conjunction with the day of passing of the Rambam⁵) strengthening and increasing the study of the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, especially the Laws of King Moshiach,⁶ in the last two chapters of the "Laws of Kings" which conclude the *Mishneh Torah*.

In addition to one's own study of this, one should also influence other Jews around him (men, women and children) in a manner of "raising many disciples,"⁷ and many more will see and emulate them.

May it be G-d's Will, that through the resolution itself will come imminently and immediately the reward, the actual fulfillment of the Rambam's words at the conclusion of his work,⁸ that after there

4. *Vayikra Rabba*, chapter 32:5. See there for cross references.

5. [*The Rambam passed away on 20 Teves. Translator's note.*]

6. This is how it is titled in the Venice edition of 5284 and 5310.

7. *Avos*, chapter 1, Mishneh 1.

8. *Laws of Kings*, end of chapter 11.

already exists "a king from the House of Dovid, expert in the Torah and involved in mitzvos like Dovid his father... and he will compel all Israel to walk in [the ways of Torah], strengthen its breeches and fight the wars of G-d" - who is the "presumed Moshiach" [b'chezkas Moshiach] - there will already be immediately the "confirmed Moshiach" [Moshiach vadai], who "does all the above and succeeds, builds the Temple in its place and gathers the dispersed of Israel... He will then improve the whole world so that it serves G-d in unity,..."

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Shmos, 21 Teves 5752)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FRIEND
Horav Avrohom Aharon ben Reb Yitzchok ע"ה
Plotkin

Passed away on Shabbat Parshat Nasso, 14 Sivan, 5780

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