

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FRIEND  
Reb **Isser Leib (Erwin)** ben Reb **Tzvi Hersh** ע"ה **Goldstein**  
Passed away on Shabbat Parshat Behar, 20 Iyar, 5782

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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# 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, 5784

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 ת' נ' צ' ב' ה'

# Reflections of Redemption

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



by  
 Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

# 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 we have already concluded all matters of Divine service and are presently standing ready to greet our righteous Redeemer [Moshiach]. This is particularly true now that we have reached the milestone of forty years<sup>8</sup> concerning which the Torah says, "G-d gave you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."<sup>9</sup> 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 Avenu].

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"<sup>10</sup> and that "this one is coming."<sup>11</sup> Accordingly we should prepare ourselves to greet him by increasing our observance of Torah and Mitzvos, **in consonance with the ruling of the Rambam**<sup>12</sup> (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)*

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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.

## The Announcement Of The Redemption

### 12

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."<sup>1</sup> 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,"<sup>2</sup> and we now stand ready ("All of you stand ready") to greet our righteous Moshiach.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

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,"<sup>4</sup> "as if they had that very day entered into Egypt."<sup>5</sup>

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

"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?"

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 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.

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

king"<sup>11</sup> has acquired an exclusively **positive** connotation, one that is **visibly and manifestly good, even to eyes of flesh**. In the words of our sages:<sup>12</sup> The Holy One Blessed be He says to Israel, "My children have no fear. All that I have done<sup>13</sup> 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,<sup>14</sup> 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."<sup>15</sup> 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."<sup>16</sup> "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."<sup>17</sup>

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

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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 ונפלים* - "supports the falling" - is similar to the expression mentioned before - *סמך 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.

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 merit<sup>7</sup> 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,"<sup>8</sup> 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,"<sup>9</sup> 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 [current<sup>10</sup>] "siege of the Babylonian

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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.]

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)*

## The Announcement Of The Redemption

### 11

With respect to Gideon, we find that: "In his days<sup>1</sup> 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.**"<sup>2</sup>

...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."<sup>3</sup> 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 Teshuvah<sup>3</sup>) [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"<sup>4</sup> a perfectly wicked person into a perfectly righteous individual, in accordance with the Talmudic ruling<sup>5</sup> that one who would betroth a woman "stipulating that I am a (perfectly<sup>6</sup>) righteous individual, even if he

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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.*