

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 Bechukotai, 5784
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
 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
 Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
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 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח"י
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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by
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

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,

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

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

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.

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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 mitzvos 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)

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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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 FREIND
Reb Yosef Yisroel ben Reb Sholom ע"ה Rosner
 Passed away on 7 Menachem-Av, 5777

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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