

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 Beha'alotecha, 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
Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
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AND IN HONOR OF
Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח"ל
Shagalov
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Redemption

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by
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

Beha'aloscha

PROPHECY

Since in the times of Moshiach, all Jews will be as prophets, now, in the days preceding Redemption, we must prepare ourselves by learning what Torah has to say about prophecy.

A major theme of this week's Torah reading is prophecy. In two separate incidents, the Torah indicates the qualifications for a prophet and the uniqueness of Moses. These events serve as a lesson, a type of prophecy, for our own times, for in the days of Moshiach every Jew will perceive G-dliness prophetically. We will all be filled with *da'as* – knowledge of G-dliness. Indeed, even the righteous gentile will reach a level of prophecy or Divine Inspiration. Isaiah declares that, "The glory of G-d shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see together that the mouth of G-d has spoken."

Belief in prophecy is a fundamental principle of Judaism, one obviously connected to the principle that Torah is eternal and true. Now it might seem that a belief in prophecy is subordinate to, or a subset of, belief in Torah. Maimonides, however, insists that belief in prophecy is a separate principle, independent of the belief that the Torah is eternal and true. In fact, he lists the two principles involving prophecy before the two principles involving the Torah. The sixth and seventh principles are: I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses is absolutely true; he was the chief of all prophets, both before and after him. The eighth and ninth principles are: I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that we now have is that which was given to Moses. I believe with

perfect faith that the Torah will not be changed, and that there will never be another Torah given by G-d.

Obviously, there is a reason why Rambam considers prophecy a principle of belief separate from belief in the immutability of Torah. To answer this, however, we must first look more deeply into the events of the Torah reading, learning what they teach us about the nature of and qualifications for a prophet.

What two incidents in this week's Torah reading give us an insight into prophecy? The first concerns the bestowal of the Divine spirit upon the seventy elders. When Moses said he could not bear the burden and complaints of the Jewish people alone, G-d said He would appoint the seventy elders as assistants, so to speak. The Torah tells us that when G-d took from the spirit of Moses and put it upon the seventy elders, they prophesied. This transferal our Sages compared to lighting one candle from another: the first flame is not diminished by its ignition of a second. However, two of the elders did not join the rest at the Tent of Meeting. Although they did not want to be selected, nevertheless, since G-d had designated them as two of the elders, they too began to prophesy. When informed that these two, Eldad and Meidad, were prophesying in the camp, Joshua tells Moses, "My lord Moses, make them stop." But Moses replies, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the L-rd's people were prophets, that the L-rd would put His spirit upon them!"

The second incident concerns Moses, Aaron and Miriam. When Miriam discovers that Moses has separated from his wife, she wonders if this is appropriate. After all, she and Aaron are prophets and they have not separated from their spouses. G-d calls the three of them to the Tent of Meeting, and there explains the difference between Moses and all other prophets. First, however, the Torah tells us that Moses was the humblest individual on the face of the

earth. Then G-d explains that He communicates with all other prophets in a vision or dream. But “My servant Moses is not so; in all My house is he trusted. Mouth to mouth I speak with him . . .”

In these days just prior to the coming of Moshiach, we must prepare for Redemption. That preparation clearly includes learning what Torah – in the broadest sense – has to say about the transformations that will occur. These transformations include not only an end to exile, a return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple. They include, as we have just seen, an elevation of the people. Divine inspiration, prophecy and knowledge of G-d will be the normal state of affairs. This obligates us to study the conditions of and qualifications for becoming a prophet. This also requires us to prepare ourselves, doing those things necessary to qualify, to become a candidate for prophecy, as it were.

What, then, are the characteristics of a prophet? What traits must we strengthen and seek to instill within ourselves? These we learn from Moses, as outlined in the incidents above. First and foremost, a prophet must be wise – filled with an awareness of G-d’s Wisdom. Prophecy reveals the secret, the inner, the esoteric; a prophet – and in the times of Moshiach, we will all reach the level of prophets – must be able to comprehend the greatness of G-d. Knowing that G-d grants prophetic inspiration, we must attain the knowledge that allows us to receive it. We must know how to sanctify ourselves, separate ourselves from the pursuit of the idle and transitory fashions of the time.

Second, a prophet must have strength – the strength to overcome the temptations of the material world and the enticements of deceptive philosophies. This, too, requires knowledge. We must know our own spiritual weaknesses, which desire most tempts us, which false ideology appears most attractive. We must also

know our strengths – that Torah and mitzvos and our Divine soul enable us to conquer, subdue and redirect our *yetzer hara* – our evil inclination.

There are other characteristics which a prophet possesses: As Moses, a prophet must be humble. Regarding the arrogant and the conceited, G-d declares, “I and he cannot dwell in the world together.” Humility and self-nullification are the pre-requisites to an open mind, one that perceives G-dliness and receives the inspiration and knowledge He bestows.

Finally, a prophet has health and wealth. These are not so much requirements as tools. Without them, a person cannot function at full capacity. Prophecy is knowledge – a special, spiritual knowledge. But our minds are not truly open, we do not comprehend fully, when limited by our financial situation or hindered by our physical condition. Good health and material abundance puts the mind at ease and makes it receptive to the Divine blessings and inspiration.

A prophet – and Redemption will make prophets of us all – has reached the heights of human wisdom, comprehending G-dliness. A prophet has conquered his inclinations, overcoming inner desires and external temptations. A prophet is humble, nullifying his ego, becoming a vehicle for G-dliness. And to facilitate all this, a prophet is complete, materially and physically.

Now that we have identified the characteristics of a prophet, we can understand why Maimonides emphasizes that belief in prophecy is itself a separate principle of faith, different than belief in the immutability of the Torah. We might think that the prophet himself is irrelevant to the process, that he is no more than a loudspeaker, as it were, transmitting G-d’s instructions but himself remaining unaffected, as “human” as before. Maimonides therefore emphasizes that prophecy is an experience, a form of

knowledge. Through prophecy, G-d brings His presence into the minds of some human beings. They know G-dliness and their minds become G-dly receptacles.

Prophecy occurs in such a way that the prophet becomes so unified with the Word of G-d that it actually becomes clothed within his mind. Thus, it is a basic principle of Judaism, one of the foundations of our faith, to *know* – to experience, realize and understand – that G-d reveals His secrets, becomes unified with the *da'as* – the knowledge of the prophet. G-d's Wisdom becomes en clothed in the mind of the prophet.

Thus belief in prophecy (the sixth principle) is a consequence of our belief in G-d and that we should serve Him alone (Maimonides's fifth principle). From this follows that Moses is the paradigmatic prophet (the seventh principle).

May our study of and preparation for the state of prophecy lead us immediately to the final Redemption, and the day when "the earth will be full of knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed."
(Based on Likkutei Sichos 23, pp. 82-91)

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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All this receives greater emphasis in recent generations, described as, "in the heels of," and as, "the heels of the heels of Moshiach," particularly in this generation, the last generation of exile... Only the heel of the foot, i.e., the absolute last generation has the ability to "rise on its own" and elevate all previous generations, because the last generation of exile will be the first generation of Redemption - the Redemption for all Jews throughout all generations!

In particular, the shepherd Aharon HaCohen² of our generation - my sainted father-in-law, the Rebbe, the leader of our generation... has emphasized this through his "invocation" of "Immediate Teshuvah, immediate Redemption,"³ and the announcement⁴ that we only have to "polish the buttons," and afterwards - the declaration that this too has already ended, and it only requires us to "stand prepared all of you"⁵ to greet our righteous Moshiach in the true and complete Redemption.

(From the talk of Shabbos Beha'aloscha, 19 Sivan 5751)

1. *[The term "ability to rise on its own" is applied to the kindling of the menorah in the Temple, where the law requires that the branches be lit in such a manner that the flames can rise by themselves without any further assistance of the one who kindles them. See Rashi beginning of Parshas Beha'aloscha, cited by the Rebbe in this Sichah. Translator's note.]*

2. Thus Aharon is called in an explicit Scriptural text "the three shepherds" (*Zechariah* 11:8. And see *Taanis* 9, end of side a).

3. Published in his *Igros Kodesh*, volume 5, page 361 and further. 377 and further. 408 and further. Volume 6, page 430 and further. *[The phrase literally means, "Immediately to Return (or Repentance), immediately to Redemption. Translator's note.]*

4. See the talks of Simchas Torah of 5689.

5. See *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, volume 4, page 279. *HaYom Yom* 15 Teves. And in several other places.

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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