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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 Bereishis, 5781

(Vol. 1)



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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
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שחח'י
Shagalov

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

We must go beyond the constraints and limits of perfection that we have already achieved. It is erev Shabbos, the eve of the era of Redemption. We are in transition to the time when, as the prophet says, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean." Just as Shabbos infuses the six days of the week even before it comes, so that even before Shabbos arrives openly, there's a foretaste – which grows stronger the closer we come to Shabbos – so, too, we must be infused with the spirit of Redemption, the proximity of *Tikun*. In the Rebbe's words: "We must live with Moshiach."

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 25, pp. 14-18)

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in Hebrew the words “*teshuvah*” and “the Sabbath” have the same letters.

This brings us to Moshiach. The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe declared, “Immediate *Teshuvah*, immediate Redemption.” This concept, that Moshiach and *teshuvah*, are connected is rooted in the Rambam, who explains that “As soon as Israel does *teshuvah*, they will be immediately redeemed.” Further, the era of Redemption, the days of Moshiach, are referred to as a day that will be all Shabbos. Thus we find several connections: *teshuvah* and Moshiach, *teshuvah* and Shabbos, and of course, Moshiach and Shabbos. These are all conceptually parallel. Shabbos is the seventh day, following six days of creation; the days of Moshiach will be the seventh millennium, following six millennia of *teshuvah*, mitzvos and acts of goodness and kindness.

Just as Shabbos represents a state of being categorically different than the preceding six days of creation, so too our spirituality, the nature of our existence, will be radically different during the days of Moshiach.

There is a practical lesson. From the perspective of the six days of creation or the first level of *teshuvah*, we have accomplished a lot – indeed, everything that can be asked of us. We have reached a level of perfection – a spiritual comfort zone reflected in our abundance of possessions and physical comforts. As the Rebbe has said, we have already done *teshuvah*.

Still, material wealth is not Shabbos. In fact, it is irrelevant on Shabbos. From the perspective of Shabbos – which is a microcosm of the days of Moshiach – creation is insufficient. True, the six days of the week, our *Tikun Olam* and the six millennium are all, each in its “sphere of influence,” a necessary beginning and critical part of the process. But it’s not enough. There’s perfection, and then there’s a true, complete, final and everlasting perfection.

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

B”H

Publisher’s Foreword

By now, surely everyone is familiar with the Rebbe’s exhortation, “Do all you can to bring Moshiach.” An important part of our effort must be to learn the *sichos* of the Rebbe. On Shabbos *Lech Lecha*, 11 MarCheshvan 5752, the Rebbe said that in our generation, the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption, there should be “an increase in Torah study This needs to be not only with the three intellectual faculties as they are connected to the emotional traits, but also in the essence of the three intellectual faculties. This means specifically an increase in the study of the inner teachings of the Torah (with intellectual explanations), including the subject of Redemption and our righteous Moshiach.”

To facilitate fulfillment of the Rebbe’s directive, we are pleased to publish *Reflections of Redemption*. It is hoped that these short essays, based on the Rebbe’s *sichos*, will help “open our eyes” to the presence of Moshiach and the immanence of Redemption.

A word about the *sichos* themselves is in order. Obviously, even the simplest *sicha* has many nuances and offers insights from many angles. The multi-dimensional nature of the *sichos* reflects the multi-dimensional nature of Chassidus. As explained in *On the Essence of Chassidus*, Chassidus penetrates all areas of Torah, revealing their underlying unity; yet it also exists at a level higher than the process of interpretation. Chassidus is not just a fifth level of interpretation, a rung higher than *pshat*, *remez*, *drush* and *sod*. Chassidus is categorically different. It can show how an apparently isolated interpretation or discussion actually has a fundamental connection with a central concept. In many ways, the *sichos* are the paradigm of how Chassidus works.

repentance is complete, once one reaches a higher level, ascends in spirituality, the *teshuvah* must also be elevated. In simple terms, the more refined, the more spiritually purified we become, the more sensitive we are to the smallest defect in our thoughts, speech or action. This requires a greater degree of *teshuvah*. For example, a stain on a common garment is not cause for great concern; the garment is still completely functional. But the same stain on a silken garment would ruin it.

So, when the Sages say that one should spend all his days in *teshuvah*, they obviously don’t mean that the sins and transgressions have not been washed away and removed by the “first level” of *teshuvah*. Assuming the *teshuvah* is done properly and sincerely, of course the *teshuvah* was perfect and complete (just as the works of creation were perfect and complete on the sixth day). Nevertheless, there are many levels of *teshuvah*, and having refined and elevated one’s self, one must also rise to the next level of *teshuvah*. (The sanctity and holiness reached on one Shabbos carries us through the coming week, but on the next Shabbos – we must reach even higher.)

We can understand this from the simple example of *tzedakah*. As one’s wealth grows, so too does the amount one is obligated to give to *tzedakah*. For an individual less well off, if he gives an amount appropriate to his status and situation, he has given *tzedakah* in the most perfect way possible. But once his situation and status improve, once he is on a higher material level, then what sufficed yesterday does not suffice today. He must give *tzedakah* not according to what he had available yesterday, but according to his means today. The same is true of *teshuvah* – one can repent – or more accurately, return – on a continuous spectrum of scrupulousness and self-examination, of sensitivity and spiritual refinement. In this sense, even *tzaddikim* can do *teshuvah*. It is no coincidence that

that the world was created in its fullness, meaning that nothing was missing. The world was created with everything it needs, lacking nothing, requiring no correction. Everything is in place; no improvement is necessary.

So which is it? Was the world created “to be made” – in need of *Tikun*, requiring improvement – or was it created complete, in all its fullness? The answer is both. Creation requires both *Tikun* – improvement – and is also perfect. Both observations of the rabbis are correct. There is neither contradiction nor paradox. Rather, each observation refers to a different part – or stage – of creation. For, as is well known, the world was created in six days. On the seventh day of Creation, Shabbos, G-d rested. So, there is a making of the world in six days, and a resting from – a finishing and completion of Creation on the seventh day.

Thus, during the six days of Creation, the world was formed in all its fullness, complete. It is to this stage of Creation that the rabbis refer when they say the world was made perfect, requiring no improvement, missing nothing. However, the very nature of Shabbos, the very holiness of the day, the fact that G-d blessed it, must lead to a “making,” a development, correction, elevation and improvement of the world.

That is, from the perspective of the six days of creation, everything is complete. From the perspective of Shabbos, the world needs improvement, because Shabbos is a higher level than the six days. At the level of Shabbos, a day sanctified with holiness, the six days of the mundane are indeed missing something. The world of the normal and everyday requires *Tikun*.

This parallels what the Alter Rebbe says in Tanya in regard to *teshuvah*, repentance: “The essence of repentance is in the heart, and in the heart are found many distinctions and gradations.” Therefore, even if one has done *teshuvah* correctly, even if the

It is well known that the Alter Rebbe’s famous dictum to “live with the times” means to live with the weekly Torah reading. Every detail of a particular Torah reading contains and reveals a timeless truth. A deep study and clear understanding of the Torah portion illuminates the fundamental principle, the relevant lesson that should permeate and guide our actions for that week. The theme of our times – and thus the underlying theme of every Torah portion – is the Rebbe’s prophecy that Moshiach is coming now. Thus, we would expect the *sichos* to demonstrate not only the inner unity between various approaches and levels of interpretation; we would expect them to reveal the element of Moshiach within each Torah reading as well. The purpose of this book, then, is to present an aspect of the element of Moshiach in the weekly Torah reading, as revealed in the Rebbe’s *sichos*.

Some of the essays follow the structure of the *sicha* itself; others use an incident or insight as a starting point to discuss in a more generalized way central concepts connected to Moshiach, such as exile, Redemption, the role of the non-Jew, etc. Some essays are extended analogies, emphasizing a point of comparison between events in the times of Moses and those of our own day, the times of Moshiach. In other essays, an idea’s relevance to Redemption might emerge only after a detailed examination of the *pshat*, or literal meaning, of a particular verse. But throughout, what emerges is Torah’s revelation of Moshiach in our times.

Hopefully, the brevity and style make these essays, each of which focuses on one aspect of the Torah reading, accessible to the average reader. For this reason, there is also an introductory summary to each essay. The informality of the format explains the absence of footnotes and other critical apparatus. The citations for references and quotations may be found in the original *sichos*.

It is customary to acknowledge those people who work ‘behind-the-scenes,’ so to speak. The initiative for this project came from

Rabbi Mendy Chanin, who also took responsibility for guiding this book to publication. The manuscript was reviewed and edited by Rabbi Heschel Greenberg; his scholarship and clarity of thought materially improved every essay. Their efforts, without which this book could not have been published, are much appreciated. Of course, any errors or oversights remain the responsibility of the author.

The essays presented here are but part of the Moshiach Awareness Campaign, which is carrying out the Rebbe's directive to prepare the world for Moshiach. It is our hope that this book will contribute to that preparation. May we soon see, in the most literal sense, the fulfillment of the Rebbe's prophecy of "immediate Redemption" and "Behold he (Moshiach) comes."

Vaad L'hafatzos Sichos
Rosh Chodesh Elul 5767

Bereishis

CREATION, TESHUVAH, TIKUN AND MOSHIACH

Tikun – Perfection – is both an accomplished state and an ongoing process. What is complete within the six days of creation still needs correction from the perspective of Shabbos. Teshuvah is the process of correction. When teshuvah is complete, we reach the time that is “all Shabbos,” the times of Moshiach.

Creation, *Teshuvah*, *Tikun* and Moshiach – what connects these is a dynamic of completion and elevation. In regard to Creation, the Torah states: “And G-d blessed the Seventh Day and made it holy, for on it He rested from all His work which G-d created to function.” What does this mean, “G-d created to function,” or, more literally, “which G-d created to make”? Why doesn't it simply say “which G-d created”? The phrase “to function” or “to make” seems superfluous. Noticing this grammatical anomaly, the rabbis commented that the Torah is telling us that Creation itself needs to be developed and corrected. G-d created the world in such a way that, when He was finished, it still needed to be made, as it were. On the seventh day, Shabbos, the world was incomplete and imperfect; it required *Tikun*, meaning improvement, regulation, reformation. (Indeed, the concept of *Tikun Olam* – perfecting the world – underlies a range of Jewish activity, in areas as diverse as mysticism and social action.) With the addition of one word in Hebrew, seemingly irrelevant, the Torah reveals a basic fact about Creation – its imperfection – and the imperative that imposes on mankind in general, and the Jewish people in particular, to improve the world, bring it to completion.

On the other hand, in another passage the rabbis also declared