

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 Va'eira, 5781
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
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 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

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 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Vaeira

FOUR CUPS OF REDEMPTION

The four cups of wine parallel the four expressions of Redemption. But the correspondence is out of order: the second expression in the Torah corresponds to the fourth cup. This reflects the difference between the Exodus and the final Redemption.

This week's Torah portion contains the four expressions of Redemption. The best known explanation for the rabbinic institution of drinking four cups of wine at the *seder* is that they correspond to these expressions. This means the four cups of wine drunk at the *seder* are connected to, and are expressions of, Redemption, paralleling the expressions found in the Torah.

Torah is not a history book. And every word is precise. The Torah uses four expressions to describe the Redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt; the four cups of wine drunk at the *seder* every year correspond to these four expressions; and the *seder* is not just a re-enactment of the Exodus of over 3300 years ago, but a reliving of the first Redemption, in such a way that it foreshadows and anticipates the final Redemption. It seems appropriate, therefore, to look more closely at how and why the *seder's* four cups of wine correspond to these four expressions of Redemption – and where they differ. For we know that the pattern and process of the final Redemption with Moshiach will follow that of the first Redemption with Moses, as it says, "As in the days of your going forth from Egypt, I will show you miracles."

This inner connection finds expression in a practical manner, in one of the laws concerning the conduct of the *seder*. The Alter Rebbe

writes in his *Shulchan Aruch*, his code of Jewish law, that one must lean when drinking the four cups of wine. He gives the following reason: “[. . . They] are reminders of Redemption and freedom. The four cups that the Sages established correspond to the four expressions of Redemption stated in the portion of *Vaeira*, namely, I shall bring, I shall redeem, I shall take and I shall save. Therefore, they have to be done while reclining, in a manner of freedom.”

Just prior to this, the Alter Rebbe writes that in general one should sit in a reclining manner during the *seder*, since in every generation one should consider it as if at that every moment – that Passover night – one was going from the slavery of Egypt to freedom. We are told that “in Nissan they were redeemed, in Nissan they will be redeemed.” Just as the first *seder* was the preparation for and beginning of the Exodus, so too, we should act and truly feel as if this *seder*, this very night, we will experience the true and final Redemption. The *seder* is more than a commemoration; it is an actual anticipation. Participating in a *seder* gets us ready for Moshiach.

Now there’s a curious point in the Alter Rebbe’s wording. He presents the four expressions of Redemption in a different order than that found in the Torah. The order in the Torah is: “I shall bring, I shall save, I shall redeem and I shall take.” The Alter Rebbe’s order is “I shall bring, I shall redeem, I shall take and I shall save.” The Alter Rebbe moves “I shall save” from the second expression to the last. Since, as mentioned earlier, everything in Torah is spiritually precise, including the details of the practical laws, we need to understand why the order of the expressions of Redemption is changed.

To understand the change from the narrative of the Exodus to the laws of the *seder*, we have to understand to which aspect of Redemption each of the four expressions refers. Since we drink four separate cups at four different times of the *seder*, clearly each

cup was established to commemorate a separate, unique concept – not just freedom in a general sense, but a particular aspect of Redemption. Thus we would expect the change of order to reflect the order of the themes. The four different stages or themes of the *seder* each centers around one of the cups of wine, culminating in the theme of (and the cup representing) future redemption.

The first cup of wine is used to recite kiddush. The verb associated with the first expression, in both the Torah and the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, is "I shall bring." It is over this cup that we recite kiddush, in which the verb "to bring" is also used, specifically in the phrase, "in remembrance of being brought from Egypt."

In the Torah, the second expression is, "I shall save," while at the *seder*, the second cup is drunk over the expression, "I shall redeem." Redemption – the first Redemption from Egypt – is connected with the recitation of the Haggadah. Although we must remember the exodus every day, on the night of Passover we speak of it at length and with many explanations. This corresponds to the description of the great wonders and miracles of the Exodus, as the Torah says, "I redeemed you with a strong arm and great miracles." Indeed, the blessing for the recitation of the Haggadah concludes, "Redeemer of Israel."

Over the third cup, "I shall take," we recite *Birkas Hamazon*, the Blessing After the Meal. In the *Birkas Hamazon* we mention our gratitude for the Torah which G-d taught us. This is reminiscent of G-d's declaration that at the time of the giving of the Torah, "I took you for My people and I became your G-d." So we see that the order in the *seder* follows the historical progression of Redemption: G-d's remembrance of the exile and servitude of the Jewish people – the "I shall bring" of kiddush and the first cup; the wonders and miracles, the actual events and story of the Exodus – the "I shall redeem" of the recitation of the Haggadah and the second cup; and

G-d taking the Jewish people and giving them the Torah – the “I shall take” of the blessing after the meal and the third cup.

This brings us to the fourth cup, “I shall save,” which we drink after finishing Hallel and saying the blessing over the songs of praise. The conclusion of Hallel, the final blessing and the part of the hagaddah that accompany it, all refer to the future – the times of Moshiach and the final Redemption. Since the specific details about Redemption would not become known until they occur, the Alter Rebbe uses a generic term such as “I shall save.”

We may thus summarize the relationship between the four cups of wine and the four expressions of Redemption as follows: the first cup, Kiddush, represents the potential for Redemption; the second cup, associated with the Haggadah, represents the Exodus itself, the actual first Redemption; the third cup, part of the Blessing After the Meal, associated with Torah, represents spiritual Redemption; and the fourth cup, associated with the completion of the *seder* and perfection, represents the coming of Moshiach.

Just as the purpose of the Exodus was Torah, so the fulfillment of Torah is Moshiach.

Thus, the *seder*, which reminds us of the Exodus, also – and perhaps mainly – points to the future Redemption. And the expressions of freedom – symbolized by the four cups of wine – correspond to the structure of the *seder*, which itself alludes and corresponds to the process of the future and final Redemption, with the coming of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 11, pp. 14-23)

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