

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 Balak, 5782

(Vol. 40)



VAAD L'HAFOTZAS SICHOS
788 EASTERN PARKWAY • BROOKLYN, NY 11213
5782 • 2022

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shgalov
 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)
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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** שתחיל
Shgalov

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

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Printed in the U.S.A.

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Balak

COMPARING AND QUALIFYING MOSHIACH

Traditionally, the prophecy of Bilaam is seen as a comparison between King David and Moshiach. At first glance, it would seem more appropriate to compare Moses and Moshiach, since both are redeemers of the Jewish people. However, in one way Moses is unique, while King David and Moshiach are comparable. Further, the prophecy of Bilaam contains four parts. Each part alludes to a different qualification shared by King David and Moshiach.

This week's Torah reading contains the prophecies of Bilaam, the non-Jewish prophet. Bilaam was hired by the enemies of the Jewish people to curse them; G-d forced him to utter blessings instead. These blessings have become part of the lexicon and prayers of Judaism. Traditionally, one set of these blessings has been seen as a reference to King David and Moshiach. Bilaam prophesied as follows:

*I see him, but not now; I perceive him, but not in the near future.
A star shall go forth from Jacob, and a staff shall arise in Israel,
Crushing all of Moab's princes, and dominating all of Seth's descendants.
Edom shall be demolished, and his enemy Seir destroyed.*

There are four parts to this prophecy; each part makes reference to both King David, the ancestor of Moshiach, and to Moshiach himself. Thus, the first part states: "I see him, but not now; I perceive him, but not in the near future." The phrase, "I see him, but not now," refers to King David; the phrase, "I perceive him, but not in the near future," refers to Moshiach.

We may immediately ask three questions: First, why are the

verses references to King David and Moshiach, and not to Moses and Moshiach? Second, why must there be an allusion to or source for Moshiach in the Torah itself? Third, why are there four parts to the prophecy?

At first glance, it seems better to compare Moses with Moshiach. Moses redeemed the Jewish people from exile, as will Moshiach; this King David did not accomplish. Indeed, Moses is called the First Redeemer and Moshiach the Final Redeemer. Also, the level of prophecy attained by Moses and Moshiach will be similar; while Moses is the greatest of the prophets, Moshiach will also be a great prophet, approaching the status of Moses. King David, on the other hand, had a much more limited level of prophecy.

However, making such a comparison misunderstands the role and function of Moshiach. It is true that Moshiach, like Moses, will redeem the Jewish people from exile; it is also true that Moshiach will be a great prophet, close to, but not as great as, Moses. Still, in his essential task, Moshiach most resembles King David. Therefore, the prophecy that tells us who Moshiach must be and what he will accomplish also speaks about King David. In this way, we get a foretaste of Moshiach, so to speak. King David is the progenitor of Moshiach.

The critical difference between Moses and Moshiach, and the crucial similarity between Moshiach and King David is – complete implementation of Torah. When Moses gave the Jews the Torah, they could not perform many of the commandments, such as the agricultural laws of the land of Israel. King David enabled close to full implementation and practice of the mitzvos. Moshiach will enable a full and total implementation. It is axiomatic, it is absolutely fundamental, that the Torah, its laws and statutes, are eternal. Torah cannot be changed; laws cannot be added or subtracted.

Because the accomplishment of Moshiach is the full and total implementation of the laws of the Torah, there is no requirement

for Moshiach to perform wonders and miracles. He may do so, of course, but that is not one of the tests. The ultimate test of Moshiach is his mastery of Torah, his absolute adherence to Torah, his ability to bring the Jewish people close to Torah and his ability to provide the security and the means by which **all** the mitzvos can be fulfilled. In short, the test of Moshiach is if he empowers Torah.

This was the accomplishment of King David. He was king over all the Jewish people; he completed the conquest of the land of Israel; he laid the groundwork for the building of the Temple; he therefore created the conditions for complete observance. The Jewish people could, for a while, observe **all** the mitzvos, fulfill the entire Torah. This will also be the accomplishment of Moshiach, but on a permanent basis.

Moses gave the Torah to the Jewish people. In that, he was unique; the Torah can be given only once. On the other hand, King David and Moshiach both enable the Jewish people to truly observe the Torah; King David did so only temporarily, and Moshiach will do so permanently and forever. Furthermore, in a real sense, Moshiach will not accomplish anything new. Rather, he will simply re-establish the kingship of David, as it was at first, rebuilding the Temple, gathering in the exiles, and restoring sacrifices and observance of all the mitzvos.

We now understand why the verses of Bilaam's prophecy are references to and a comparison of King David and Moshiach. We can also answer the second question. Torah must tell us who Moshiach is and what he will accomplish, because proper observance of Torah depends on Moshiach. In other words, Torah says, these are the mitzvos; this is how they should be observed; in order to observe them properly, you will need a king; you will know who this king is when he does the following; when the king creates these conditions, you will be able to completely, perfectly and truly observe the mitzvos.

Moshiach removes the servitude of the Jewish people, freeing them from slavery to other peoples and to foreign ideologies. Thus liberated, the Jewish people become totally absorbed and involved in Torah. Hence, denial of Moshiach is denial of Torah. And denial of Torah is denial of Moshiach. In this sense, the coming of Moshiach and the complete observance of all mitzvos are interdependent and synonymous. Observance of mitzvos are the result and purpose of Moshiach.

We can now explain the four parts of the prophecy. The Torah itself testifies to the identity and achievements of Moshiach. The test of Moshiach is Torah and mitzvos: does this leader, this prophet, lead the Jewish people to Torah and mitzvos? The four parts are the four requirements.

First, who is the person? "I see him, but not now" – refers to King David. "I perceive him, but not in the near future" – refers to Moshiach. The verbs "see" and "perceive" indicate that the leader must be recognized and identified as such. Thus, as Maimonides states, "Moshiach must be a king, from the house of David, expert in all aspects of Torah and mitzvos, like his ancestor."

Second, how does he lead the Jewish people? "A star shall go forth from Jacob" – this is King David. "And a staff shall arise in Israel" – this is Moshiach. The star guides and the staff compels; both are forms of leadership. Therefore, again quoting Maimonides, Moshiach will compel all Israel to go in the way of Torah and heal the breaches in its observance.

Third, how will he affect the nations of the world? Obviously, all opposition to Torah or subjugation of the Jewish people must end. Thus: "Crushing all of Moab's princes" – This is King David. "And dominating all of Seth's descendants" – this is Moshiach. Moshiach will fight the wars of G-d, successfully overcoming those who oppose the Jewish people or the Torah and its commandments.

The prophecy concludes, "Edom shall be demolished," referring

to King David, and “his enemy Seir will be destroyed,” referring to Moshiach. That is, the nations will cease to exist as such, for their sense of sovereignty and self-rule leads to a denial and defiance of G-d. Rather, the nations will recognize they were bequeathed falsehood and their leaders and prophets deceived them. Thus, the world itself will be perfected, and all humanity will serve G-d together.

Our belief in, longing for and study of the laws of Moshiach will lead to the day when all people, pure of speech, will call on the Name of G-d and serve Him with one purpose.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 18, pp. 271-284)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. Bracha Leah Chava bas Reb Shmuel ע"ה Finkelstein
Passed away, on 18 Tamuz, 5773
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
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