

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 Nitzavim, 5781
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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
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 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'ל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
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Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Nitzavim

FROM PERSONAL EXILE TO GENERAL REDEMPTION

Nitzavim is always read the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. The Torah reading contains a promise of Redemption. The conjunction of the verb allows the verse to be read two ways: one, G-d caused the exiles to return, or two, G-d will return from exile with them. The connection between the promise of Redemption and the beginning of the Torah reading is that so long as one Jew remains in exile, so does the Divine Presence. Ending exile and gathering all the Jews is a difficult task. Each individual, whatever his or her status, has a personal exile which is part of and contributes to the general exile. All Jews must be redeemed to take the Divine Presence out of exile. The practical lesson is that all Jews must go out of exile for the Redemption to be true and complete. We are responsible not only for our personal redemption, but that of the entire Jewish people.

This week's Torah reading, *Nitzavim*, is always read the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. Further, this week's Torah reading contains a clear, unmistakable reference to Redemption. We may therefore ask what is the connection between *Nitzavim*, Rosh Hashanah and Redemption.

The Torah reading begins as follows: "You are standing today, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d – your leaders, your tribal chiefs, your elders, your officers, every Israelite man, your children, your women, and the converts in your camp – even your wood-cutters and water drawers." These verses follow the severe rebuke recorded in last week's portion. There, the Torah predicts that the Jewish people will not observe the mitzvos, thus violating the covenant with G-d. As a result, they will experience devastation, hardship and suffering. Nevertheless, the Torah assures them that, after the

torments of exile, they will be redeemed. They stand together before G-d this day, to enter into the covenant. Part of the covenant is the assurance that, just as the prediction of exile will be fulfilled, so will the promise that the Jewish people will return and repossess the land. This is the concept of *Nitzavim*, or standing.

Shortly thereafter, there is an explicit promise of Redemption. The Torah declares that: "Then the L-rd your G-d will return your captivity and have mercy upon you. He will return and gather you from among all the nations where the L-rd your G-d has scattered you. [Even] if your dispersed are at the ends of the heavens, the L-rd your G-d will gather you up from there, and from there He will take you. And the L-rd your G-d will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. And He will do you good and multiply you over your fathers."

The wording of this passage teaches a deep lesson about the nature of exile and Redemption. In Hebrew, there are several verb forms, or conjugations. Here, we would expect the causative conjugation, since G-d is causing the Jewish people to return. Indeed, that is the sense in which the verses are translated. However, the Torah does not use the causative conjugation; rather, it uses the simple active conjugation. The literal meaning of the verse is that, "The L-rd your G-d will return with your captivity."

Obviously, the causative reading is the primary reading: G-d will cause the exiles to return. Nevertheless, grammatically speaking, the verse says that G-d Himself will return with the captives of the Jewish people. Therefore the Sages explain that in this verse G-d refers to His own exile, as it were. G-d and the Jewish people are so closely attached, they cannot be separated; it is as if G-d went into exile with the Jewish people. When the Jewish people return to G-d, when they do *teshuvah*, G-d will end their banishment. Their exile will end and G-d Himself – the Divine Presence – will return with them.

What is the relationship between this passage, that “The L-rd your G-d will return with your captivity,” and the beginning of the Torah reading, “You are standing today, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d”? On the simplest level, it means that so long as one Jew remains in exile, the ingathering of all the Jewish exiles – the Redemption – is not complete. On a deeper level, it also means that so long as one Jew remains in exile, so does the Divine Presence.

Taking each and every Jew out of exile is a laborious and strenuous task, for there is both the general exile of the Jewish people as a whole, and the particular exile of the individual. Any distancing from Torah and mitzvos, any moment that passes without an awareness that G-dliness permeates all of existence, is a type of exile. The exodus from this personal, inner exile requires us to truly perceive G-dliness, and act upon that perception. Thus our Sages tell us that the day of the gathering of the exiles is so great and so difficult that it seems as though G-d Himself must take each individual out of exile with His own Hand.

An individual’s personal exile and redemption includes, and is part of, the general exile and redemption of the Jewish people as a whole. The verse itself alludes to this when it says, “The L-rd your G-d will return with your captivity.” The phrase, “The L-rd your G-d” is in the singular, meaning that, aside from the collective relationship of the Jewish people with G-d, each individual has a particular relationship, whether he is a leader or a drawer of water.

When G-d seizes the hand of the first Jew and takes him out of exile, then automatically, the Divine Presence itself should also go out of exile. At that moment, the complete and final Redemption should occur. But redemption does not occur when the first Jew leaves exile. When G-d actually “seizes the hand” and takes a particular Jew out of exile, only the particular and condensed radiation of the Divine Presence connected with that individual is

redeemed. Thus other Jews, and the Divine Presence itself, remain in exile. Only the Redemption of **all** Jews redeems the Divine Presence itself.

How does all this apply practically, on a personal level? It's possible to think that going out of one's own exile is sufficient. All that is required is individual redemption – raising my level of Torah study, my observance of mitzvos, etc. But the opposite is true: when a Jew is redeemed from his own personal “exile,” he must see what other Jews need for their own “exodus.” **All** Jews must go out of exile for the Redemption to be true and complete. Therefore, whatever depends on him, he must do.

Acting on this awareness counteracts a mistaken notion one might have. A person who has gone out of “exile” may look condescendingly on others. After all, the “other” is in the lowest possible state, still in a state of exile, distant from G-dliness, Torah and mitzvos. “He,” on the other hand, is superior – “ready” for the Redemption, well-learned, observant. How is it possible that his redemption is connected with and dependent upon the **other**?

The answer connects the beginning of the Torah portion to Redemption. For *Nitzavim* begins, “You are standing today, **all of you**, before the L-rd your G-d.” This emphasizes that the covenant requires **every** Jew. Only when the Jewish people stand together – “**all of you**” – before G-d is the covenant established. True, there is a hierarchy, an order – from the leaders down through the water-drawers. This hierarchy has its importance. But first there must be an ingathering – the Redemption – of **all** the Jewish people, in a general sense. This must include not only the leaders, but the wood-choppers and water-drawers.

This brings us to the connection of *Nitzavim* and Redemption with Rosh Hashanah. For the verse says, “You are standing, **today**, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d.” This “today,” is Rosh Hashanah,

which is why the portion of *Nitzavim* is always read the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. When the Jewish people are gathered today, on Rosh Hashanah, "all of you," together, then G-d assures us He will judge us favorably. When there is *Ahavas Yisroel* – love for a fellow Jew – between the leaders and the drawers of water, and all levels and types in between, then the Jewish people, "all of you," will be inscribed for a sweet, good year. Indeed, it will be the year of Redemption, when "the L-rd your G-d will return your captivity," and "the L-rd your G-d will return **with** your captivity," for G-d Himself will take every Jew out of exile, one by one, gathering us together, all of us, today.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 9, pp. 175-183)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Chana** (Carrie) bas Reb **Meir** ע"ה **Greenberg**
Passed away on 9 Sivan, 5781
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