

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 Yayeilech, 5782
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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. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחי'
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY

Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Vayeilech

A LIVING TORAH

Anxiously anticipating Moshiach actually accelerates his arrival. The Rebbe has directed us to make Redemption a living reality. Mitzvos are by and large pragmatic. How do study and preparation hasten Moshiach in reality? When we become a living Torah, we facilitate fulfillment of the Torah's purpose, namely, Redemption. This theme of unity, of oneness with the Torah can be found in this week's Torah reading. As Moses was a living Torah, so Moshiach will be a living Torah. And to the extent that we incorporate this, make ourselves a living Torah, we reveal the aspect of Moses, the spark of Moshiach, within ourselves. At the end of Moses's life "the traditions and fountains of wisdom were closed" to him. This indicated a transmission of leadership to Joshua. The central attribute of Moses is truth, which defines Torah. Because of his unity with Torah, affecting any part of Torah affected Moses as well.

The twelfth principle of faith declares our belief in the coming of Moshiach: "I believe with a perfect faith in the coming of Moshiach, and even though he tarry I will await his coming every day." By expressing belief and anticipation, that itself makes it possible for him to come every day. On many occasions, the Rebbe has urged us to prepare for the coming of Moshiach by studying Torah more intensely, particularly those sections relating to Redemption. We must reorient our attitude by living in anticipation and expectation of Moshiach's imminent arrival, explaining the concepts of Redemption to others, influencing them in a pleasant, peaceful manner. Such actions make Redemption a living reality.

Still, there is something abstract about this. Most mitzvos have a very practical, tangible aspect. Think of a mitzvah – such as tefillin, lighting Shabbos candles, or keeping kosher – and you

realize immediately that it involves doing something physically with a material object. Even the mitzvos of an emotional nature, mitzvos of speech and feelings, such as loving G-d, fearing G-d, being careful with our speech, etc., are pragmatic. A true love for and fear of G-d visibly affects how we act and who we are.

This raises a central question regarding Moshiach and our role in bringing Redemption: How does simply learning about a subject, even becoming excited about it, make it a reality? Does preparing for an honored guest really accelerate his arrival? When we polish the furniture and woodwork, wash and wax the floor, set the table, etc., does he really come any faster?

Probably not. So, how can my Torah study bring Moshiach? True, it can change my perceptions and my behavior, but how can learning and talking about Redemption make it real? Of course, one answer is that it leads me to greater acts of goodness and kindness. But that's not quite the same as transforming the world, making it a dwelling place for G-dliness. Furthermore, even if I'm ready for Moshiach – I've made all the preparations – does that guarantee he will come? By analogy, just because I've done everything necessary to make the honored guest feel welcome – my house is ready, the food is cooked to perfection, everything has been polished and shines – is he forced to come? When I invite him, of course I'll tell him all the details, how much effort went into getting things in order and how eager I am to see him. But even if he accepts my invitation, will he come?

The answer to this is yes, if we have the same mind-set. If there's a unity, a oneness and harmony between us, then, like partners in a dance, the movement of one automatically evokes a corresponding, complimentary movement in the other. By studying Torah in such a way that we become united with it, Torah becomes engraved in us. When Torah becomes inseparable from our very being, we in

fact hasten the Redemption. For Torah itself exists to transform the world, to reveal the inner G-dliness within creation. Thus, we must become a living Torah.

This theme of unity, of oneness with the Torah can be found in this week's Torah reading. Moses, of course, was himself a living Torah and the paradigm for Moshiach. As Moses was a living Torah, so Moshiach will be a living Torah. And to the extent that we incorporate this, make ourselves a living Torah, we reveal the aspect of Moses, the spark of Moshiach, within ourselves.

At the beginning of the Torah portion, Moses says to the Jewish people, "A hundred and twenty years old I am this day. I can no longer go out and come in." Moses does not mean that his physical strength is waning, for later on the Torah testifies about Moses that "his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated." Rather, as our Sages explain, Moses could no longer "go out and come into" the words of Torah. That is, the "traditions and fountains of wisdom" were closed for him.

Of course, one could immediately raise a question: If the "traditions and fountains of wisdom" were closed for Moses, how does he transmit the last three Torah readings, *Vayeilech*, *Haazinu* and *V'zos Haberachah*, to the Jewish people? These three portions contain instructions, moral exhortations and important laws, such as that for writing a sefer Torah. Obviously, then, there must be a difference between the "traditions and fountains of wisdom" which were closed for Moses, and the actual words of Torah.

So, if "I can no longer go out and come in" means that the "traditions and fountains of wisdom were closed," we have to understand what are the "traditions and fountains of wisdom," and *why* they were closed.

First, we need to define the two terms. At Sinai, G-d gave Moses the Written Torah and also the principles for applying its laws and

interpreting its teachings. In addition, certain concepts were given orally to Moses at Sinai. The Torah itself neither mentions these traditions explicitly, nor even alludes to them. Nor can we derive them by logical analysis or using the rules of interpretation. These customs and practices are simply “traditions,” passed on orally from Moses to Joshua, and so throughout the generations.

A “fountain of wisdom,” on the other hand, refers to the debates and deliberations, the limitless discussions about the Torah. These discussions flow one from another, much as water continually flows from a fountain. Obviously, through the give-and-take of debate and argumentation, we can uncover infinite meanings and implications of Torah.

This explains how Moses was able to transmit and teach the last three portions of the Torah. The “traditions and fountains of wisdom” are both extra-textual. Neither customs nor debates are recorded in the Torah; neither is necessary to understand or apply the law in a practical sense.

So we come back to the question: Because the “traditions and fountains of wisdom” were closed to Moses, he could no longer go out and come in. But go out and come in of what? We know that Moses was both teacher and leader. His role of teacher – transmitter of the Torah – remained, as we have seen. Therefore, when Moses says that, “A hundred and twenty years old I am this day. I can no longer go out and come in,” it means he can no longer act as leader of the Jewish people. His leadership had ended and Joshua’s had begun.

Closing off a part of Torah – the extra-textual part – indicated that Moses’s authority had passed to Joshua. But why should this be? What connection is there between the extra-textual part of Torah and the leadership of Moses?

The central attribute of Moses is truth. (This is why he is identified

with Torah, which is called a Torah of Truth.) Truth, by definition, doesn't change. Therefore, when the "traditions and fountains of wisdom" became closed, it affected the very essence of Moses.

Since Moses and the Torah were a single entity, Torah was engraved into the very essence of his being. Every word of Torah was a vital part of his identity. Because of this unity with Torah, the absence of even an ancillary aspect affected Moses, touching the core of his existence and altering his status. And it indicated that the time had come for the leadership of Joshua, whose existence tolerated change, unlike that of Moses. This is why our Sages said Moses's face radiated like the sun and Joshua's face radiated like the moon. Moses's light was constant like the sun; Joshua's waxed and waned, like that of the moon. Thus as soon as Moses experienced change, that was a sign it was time for the era of Joshua to begin.

This is the lesson: At every moment of life we must be completely bound to Torah, as though we are one entity. If it's Torah, then even the smallest detail, and the most abstract argument or implication, must be relevant to our Divine service and affect the very core of our being.

In this way, we become a living Torah, as Moses was a living Torah. And in this way, the spark of Moses within each of us joins with the spark of Moses in the leader of the generation to make Moshiach and Redemption a practical reality.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 29, pp. 189-194)

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