

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 Ha'azinu, 5782
(Vol. 53)



VAAD L'HAFOTZAS SICHOS
788 EASTERN PARKWAY • BROOKLYN, NY 11213
5782 • 2021

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** שת"ח
Shagalov
DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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Printed in the U.S.A.

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Haazinu

ON THAT SELFSAME DAY

Demanding Moshiach seems to be a refusal to accept G-d's decree. A similar question arises in this week's Torah reading. G-d tells Moses to ascend the mountain b'etzem hayom hazeh – on that selfsame day – when he will die. This phrase – b'etzem hayom hazeh – occurs two other times in the Torah, once in connection with Noah and once in connection with the Exodus. According to Rashi it indicates an attempt to prevent an event. There is a difference between the wicked trying to prevent Noah's entrance to the ark and the exodus of the Jewish people, on the one hand, and the righteous trying to prevent the death of Moses on the other. By defying G-d's Will, so to speak, the Jewish people expressed their gratitude to Moses, according to Jewish law. The actions of Moses continued to benefit the Jewish people until that very day. The people actually did have the potential to prevent the death of Moses. Going through exile allows us to fulfill that potential.

One of the central questions regarding the coming of Moshiach concerns our role in bringing the Redemption. The Rebbe has explained the importance of demanding Moshiach. We should not simply ask for the Redemption. We should **insist** that G-d send the Redeemer. It's one thing to declare our faith in the coming of Moshiach, to state we will await his arrival, even eagerly anticipate it, despite all the delays. It's another to persistently and incessantly urge, entreat and demand Moshiach. This is more than pouring out our hearts, crying out from the midst of troubles and difficulties. We are attempting to require G-d to give us what we want, what He promised: **We Want Moshiach Now!**

But by what right do we make such a demand? G-d will surely send Moshiach – but in His time. How dare we try to force G-d's

Hand, so to speak? Singing “We Want Moshiach Now” is not like prayer, when we present our request before G-d. Singing “We Want Moshiach Now” seems to be almost an act of defiance, a refusal to accept G-d’s decree. When we insist that Moshiach should come immediately, aren’t we opposing and challenging G-d’s Will?

This same question arises at the end of this week’s Torah reading. There it states: “And the L-rd spoke unto Moses *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* – on that selfsame day – saying, ‘Go up into this mountain of Avarim, mount Nevo . . . Behold the land of Canaan which I give to the children of Israel for a possession. And die in the mountain which you will ascend . . .’”

The apparently superfluous phrase *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* – on that selfsame day – occurs in two earlier passages of the Torah. One concerns Noah’s entry to the ark, the other the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. The people of Noah’s generation said that if they noticed Noah entering the ark, they would not permit him to enter and would destroy the ark. Similarly, the Egyptians declared that if they noticed the Jewish people trying to leave, they would take weapons of war and kill the children of Israel. In both cases, G-d responds, “I will cause this to happen (Noah’s entrance to the ark and the Exodus from Egypt) *‘b’etzem hayom hazeh’* – in the middle of the day. Let anyone with the power to stop it, let him come and stop it.”

Thus, as Rashi points out, the phrase *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* must have a similar meaning in this context. Hearing that Moses is about to die, the Jewish people protest. “If we notice him about to ascend the mountain, we will not permit him. The man who brought us out of Egypt, split the sea, caused the manna to descend, brought quails, raised the well, who did all this for us and gave us the Torah – we will not permit him to leave us.” Here, too, G-d says, *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* – in the middle of the day, in the sight of all, Moses will ascend.

The parallel to our own situation is obvious. Moses was the first redeemer and he will be the last redeemer. That is, the soul of Moses will enclthe itself in the soul of Moshiach; there is a spark of Moses in Moshiach. Indeed, there is a spark of Moses within every Jew in general, and within the leader of the generation in particular. When the leader of our generation, the Moses of our generation, tells us we are the last generation of exile and the first of redemption, then we parallel the generation Moses led out of Egypt, which was the last of exile and the first of redemption for its time. Of the leader, the Moses of our generation, we have said, in effect, we will not permit him to ascend. We insist he lead us into the time of Redemption, as the generation of the Wilderness demanded Moses lead them into Israel.

In the case of Moses – the leader and redeemer – the Moshiach of his generation, the whole concept seems problematic. In the first two instances, the people of Noah’s generation and the Egyptians were a majority. This majority opposition felt, mistakenly, that Noah in his time, and the Jewish people in theirs, could be stopped by sheer force of numbers. They could think, wrongly, that their physical and numerical superiority could stop someone else, or a group, from doing something. But in the case of Moses, how could the children of Israel prevent the death of Moses, an event entirely in G-d’s Hand? Further, the Egyptians and people of Noah’s generation were wicked. We would expect them to protest and defy G-d’s Will. But how can the Jewish people challenge G-d’s Will?

Nevertheless, the term *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* clearly indicates an opposition to G-d’s Will. So even here, when the children of Israel are about to enter the land, and the entire generation is devoted to fulfilling G-d’s commandments, the phrase *“b’etzem hayom hazeh”* indicates an opposition to G-d’s Will. They wish to prevent the ascent and death of Moses.

The Jewish people reasoned as follows: they had just learned, in regard to the first fruits, the law of expressing gratitude. There is an obligation to do all in one's power to thank a benefactor. When G-d blesses them with a bountiful harvest, they must bring the first fruits. Similarly, given all that Moses did for the Jewish people, they had a duty to express their gratitude. Not only did they owe Moses for his past actions; the things Moses did – taking them out of Egypt, splitting the sea, bringing the manna and the quails, raising the well, and giving the Torah – continued to benefit the Jewish people until that very day. Allowing Moses to leave them, after all he had done, when they were on the edge of the land of Israel, would certainly be a denial of blessings and beneficence.

But hadn't G-d commanded otherwise?

However, the command was directed **only** to Moses. The Jewish people weren't commanded to ascend the mountain; only Moses was. To the contrary, by preventing the departure of Moses, the Jewish people were also fulfilling a Divine commandment – to acknowledge benevolence. Accordingly, the death of Moses was conditional: **he** was commanded to ascend, but the people had the option and opportunity to prevent it.

In other words, although there was a decree that Moses should die, because this decree affected the community, the protest of the community could annul it. In truth, the Jewish people **did** have the power to nullify the decree – just as the prayers of Moses himself had earlier altered decrees against the Jewish people.

If so, why didn't the efforts of the Jewish people succeed in regard to Moses? Because paradoxically, success would have destroyed them. How so? Our Sages tell us that everything Moses did is permanent and eternal. Everything Moses made endures. If Moses had brought the Jewish people into the land of Israel, their entry would have been an achievement of Moses. As such,

it could never have been reversed. Thus, when the Jews sinned, they could not have been driven out of Israel. Exile would not have been possible. The only punishment left would have been for them to be destroyed. Had Moses led the Jewish people into the land, a later exile would not be possible. The presence of Moses in the land of Israel would mean the people could not be exiled, and the only available punishment would be destruction.

Today, there is this difference: having already suffered the punishment of exile, nothing prevents us from exerting ourselves in Divine service. We have a right and a responsibility to remove every obstacle that conceals or obscures the Redemption. We have the power to nullify the decree withholding Moshiach. To fulfill our obligation, we must demand "We Want Moshiach Now" and do all in our power to reveal the Moses, the Moshiach within ourselves. In this way we bring about the Redemption and the revelation of Moshiach, the Moses of our generation.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 19, pp. 339-347)

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