

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 Mikeitz, 5785
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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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AND IN HONOR OF
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DEDICATED BY
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 e-mail: yys@torah4blind.org

Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,
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by
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

Mikeitz

JOSEPH'S SHABBOS

Shabbos is a foretaste of Moshiach. While all the patriarchs kept Shabbos before the mitzvah was given at Sinai, Joseph's observance was unique. His preparations invested Shabbos into the world. Similarly, we must prepare the world for "the day that is all Shabbos," the time of Redemption.

Shabbos is compared to the World to Come. Many prayers acknowledge that observance of Shabbos gives us a foretaste of the era of Redemption. For instance, in the *Birkas Hamazon* – the blessing after a meal – the following sentence is added on Shabbos: "May the Merciful One let us inherit that day which will be all Shabbos and rest for life everlasting." The *Minchah*, or afternoon prayer, of Shabbos describes Shabbos in words used about the days of Moshiach: "a day of rest and holiness You have given your people . . . a rest of love and generosity, a rest of truth and faithfulness, a rest of peace, serenity and security, a perfect rest with which You find favor." Finally, perhaps the most famous Shabbos prayer, *Lecho Dodi*, sung Friday nights to welcome in the Shabbos, is a poem about the coming of Moshiach and the Redemption, containing verses such as, "To the right and to the left you shall spread out, and the Lord you shall extol. And we shall rejoice and exult through the man who is a descendent of Peretz," that is Moshiach.

Indeed, so closely bound are Shabbos and Moshiach that our sages declare, "If Israel were to observe properly the Shabbos twice, they would immediately be redeemed." Other sources say this prescription for Redemption applies even if the Jewish people observe Shabbos properly only once, being careful about the laws

and its details just one time. Observance of Shabbos even once suffices to bring Moshiach immediately.

We may well ask, why does Shabbos, of all the mitzvos in the Torah, have such a special relationship with Moshiach? Why doesn't observing any of the other commandments, such as keeping kosher or eating matzoh or giving *tzedekah*, also result in an *immediate* Redemption? True, every mitzvah contributes to the coming of Moshiach, as the children's song says, "with every mitzvah we do, we add a brick to the Third Temple." Equally true, as Maimonides says, that our next thought, word or deed may be the act that tips the scale to the side of merit and ushers in the Redemption. Nevertheless, the only act guaranteed to bring Moshiach immediately and instantaneously is a universal observance of Shabbos.

A Midrash – a rabbinic insight – on one of the verses of this week's Torah reading, *Mikeitz*, alludes to the unique nature of Shabbos. (As an aside, it may be mentioned that even the name of the portion hints at the Redemption, for the word "*mikeitz*" means "at the end." When a Jew hears the words "at the end," he automatically thinks of the "end" of exile and the beginning of Redemption.)

In this week's portion, Joseph, in anticipation of a meal with his brothers, tells his chief servant to slaughter an animal for the feast and to "prepare" it. The particular word used for "prepare," the Midrash notes, is associated with Shabbos observance. One who "prepares" is preparing – during the six days of the week – for Shabbos. Use of specifically this word tells us, according to the Midrash, that Joseph observed the Shabbos before it was given.

Obviously this doesn't mean that Joseph didn't keep any of the other commandments, or that his brothers didn't even keep Shabbos. Commentaries agree that all twelve sons of Jacob kept the mitzvos of the Torah, in accordance with G-d's statement about

Abraham that “I have known him, in order he should command his children and his household after him.” Rather, since the specific allusion is only to Joseph’s observance of Shabbos, it means there is something distinctive about Joseph and about his Shabbos observance.

But if the Midrash wants to tell us that Joseph’s Shabbos observance was unique, why does it do so obliquely, deriving the insight from the use of the word “prepare”? Also, why does the Midrash emphasize that Joseph kept the Shabbos before it was given? Such a conclusion seems obvious, since Joseph lived three generations before Moses.

In order for something to be given, it must already exist. “Giving” means taking something from one place to another, transferring ownership or possession from one person to the next. In our context, this means that already at the time of Joseph, Shabbos existed. It had just not yet been given to the Jewish people. Therefore, the Midrash emphasizes not only Joseph and Shabbos, but also that Joseph kept the Shabbos before it was given.

At the time of creation, Shabbos was designated as a unique and holy day, as it says, “G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work.” At the time of the Exodus, G-d gave Shabbos to the Jews, commanding them to “remember and observe” all its commandments.

Shabbos, then, is different than all the other mitzvos. The other mitzvos came into existence at Sinai, at the giving of the Torah. When Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons kept the commandments before the Torah was given, they did so according to their own, human, capacity. However, Shabbos as a day of Divine rest came into existence at the time of creation. But implanting that level of spirituality into the world had to wait until the revelation at Sinai, when Shabbos was given to the Jews.

That G-d rested on Shabbos and then gave it to the Jewish people at Sinai means that human beings, by themselves, cannot create Shabbos. The principle of Shabbos – and all the details that give it substance and reality – belongs to G-d alone. At Sinai, G-d implanted Shabbos into the Jewish people. They became the mitzvah, so to speak.

Although Joseph's brothers, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob kept the mitzvos before the Torah was given, they couldn't take the principle of Shabbos – total awareness of G-dliness – and invest it into the physical world. They could only act symbolically, because Shabbos, like the rest of Torah, had not yet been given.

Joseph, on the other hand, did implant Shabbos into the world, which is why his observance of – his preparation for – Shabbos is alluded to in the Torah. Joseph's brothers were shepherds, leading a life of contemplation, isolated from the world. They were aloof from and had no influence on the mundane. Joseph, on the other hand, lived in Egypt, the most dissolute and materialistic of nations. Nor was Joseph an ordinary citizen; he was the viceroy, second to the king, and as a result deeply involved in all the affairs of state, with little time to devote to his personal spiritual growth. Nevertheless, since, as the Torah states, "G-d was with Joseph," he was able to observe Shabbos as G-d wanted, even before Sinai, in a manner of complete tranquility, spiritual as well as physical.

We can now explain why Joseph's Shabbos observance is alluded to with the word "prepare." Shabbos itself, on which an individual ceases all creative labor, changes the person. The rest transforms him, physically and spiritually. The actions we take during the week to prepare for Shabbos, on the other hand, affect the world. The very act of preparation transforms the world, elevating it to a connection with the holiness of Shabbos. And this effect, this elevation, is carried over into Shabbos itself, for the Shabbos meals must be prepared beforehand.

This brings us back to Shabbos and Moshiach. Just as we must get ready for Shabbos by transforming the world, utilizing its resources to prepare our Shabbos meals, so too we must get ready for Moshiach by transforming the world, preparing it for the coming Redemption. Now that we stand after Sinai, when the principle of Shabbos has penetrated every Jew, we need only prepare the world to greet Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 20, pp. 200-206)

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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When one is totally immersed in a certain subject, it's human nature when encountering another topic to immediately search for and find the connection with that subject in which he is immersed, even though this other topic has its own issues and critical features.

As Jews -- particularly in the end of the period of exile (after the passing of all the deadlines¹ and after my sainted father-in-law testified that we have already done *Teshuvah* and that all the necessary efforts have been completed) -- "we are totally immersed" in "awaiting for him every day that he will come."² Throughout each and every day we wait and yearn for the true and complete Redemption.

And, inasmuch as Jews are passionately involved with the coming of Moshiach, it is reasonable that in all matters we should search primarily for their association with our awaiting every day that he will come.

Applying this to a timely theme:

As we stand in the days of Chanukah -- though a multifaceted Holiday -- we ought to emphasize primarily its connection with Redemption.

This festival was instituted because of the miracle with the cruse of oil involved with the kindling of the menorah in the *Beis HaMikdosh* [Temple]. Afterwards, the Hasmoneans dedicated the Temple ("They cleared Your Sanctuary and purified Your Holy Temple"). Mention of the Temple is an immediate reminder of the Redemption, and serves

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. The text of "Ani Ma'amin - I believe" (Printed in several editions of the prayer book) based on the language of *Chabakuk* 2:3. *Commentary on the Mishneh* by Rambam, *Sanhedrin*, Introduction to chapter "Chelek," 12th Principle.

to enhance our anticipation for his coming every day, the building and dedication of the third *Beis Hamikdosh* and the lighting of the Menorah by Aaron the High Priest, which will occur with the true and complete Redemption by our righteous Moshiach.

...Similarly with respect to the Torah reading of the Shabbos of Chanukah. During the Torah reading, as soon as a Jew hears and comprehends the word "*Mikeitz* - the End," he exclaims, "Aha! This is an allusion to the end of exile, referred to as the "end of days - *Kaitz Hayamim*" [spelled with a final mem which connotes the end of exile], as well as "the end of days - *Kaitz Hayamin*" [spelled as it is in the end of the book of Daniel, with a final nun³ which connotes] the deadline for the Redemption!

And afterwards, when one reads or hears the Haftorah (the selection of the prophets read weekly after the Torah reading) which states, "I beheld the Menorah, entirely of gold,"⁴ one senses immediately a reference to the future Redemption!⁵

Likewise, upon reading about the *Nesi'im* [princes] and the *Nasi* [prince] of the tribe of Reuvein [Jacob's first born son] in particular, a Jew is reminded forthwith of the true and complete Redemption, at which time all the *Nesi'im* will be present, and the status of the Jewish People as the "first born child" of the whole world will be manifest.

Moreover, the fourth light of Chanukah, is an immediate reminder of the "fourth [and final] Redemption," when the most complete G-dly manifestations will extend to all four directions of the world.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz,
Shabbos Chanukkah, 5751)

3. See *Or HaTorah*, beginning of our Parsha. See also above p. 20 for further references.

4. *Zecharya* 4:2.

5. *Midrash* cited in *Likkutei Torah, Be'ha'aloscha* 34, end side b.

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The revelation of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus began with the Alter Rebbe on the 19th of Kislev and continued and increased with greater strength and greater vigor through all seven generations of its leaders. This includes in particular the founding of the Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim, the soldiers of the House of Dovid who go out to the wars of the House of Dovid to be victorious over those "who revile the footsteps of your Moshiach"¹ and to bring into reality the revelation of Dovid King Moshiach.² The revelation comes to its fulfillment in our generation, which has already completed all the requirements, and the only thing necessary is "to open the eyes" and to see that "Behold he (the King Moshiach) comes."³

* * *

From this we can derive a practical lesson:

In addition to this generation being the last generation of exile, the end of the exile, it is also the first generation of Redemption, the beginning of Redemption. We therefore find ourselves at an auspicious time connected to the Redemption. There should be a daily increase (connected to the lesson of Chanukah,⁴ that "from here on continuously increase"⁵) in matters that bring the Redemption into reality and into the open.

1. *Tehillim* 89:52.

2. See *Sichos Simchas Torah* 5661 - *Likkutei Dibburim* vol. 4, 787b and ff. *Sefer HaSichos* 5702, end of p. 141 ff.

3. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabba* on the verse.

4. And in a continuing manner also after Chanukah, since "increase in holiness and (certainly) don't decrease" (*Shabbos* 21b).

5. *Shabbos* 21b. *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* Section 671, section 2. [*This is a reference to the increase in light during the days of Chanukah, lighting one candle the first night, two candles the second, etc. Translator's note.*]

Among them:

One must strengthen one's belief in, longing for and anticipation of the coming of Moshiach, to such an extent that as long as our righteous Moshiach has not yet come in reality and openly, one feels his life is lacking. As Yaakov said, even one hundred and thirty seven years were "few"⁶ because the Redemption had not yet actually come.

Further and fundamental:

One must increase in learning and spreading the inner teachings of the Torah (and Torah in general is Yaakov's function), oil (secrets of the secrets) of the Torah, in a way that they light "from the opening of the house on the outside,"⁷ "your wellsprings will spread outward,"⁸ "until the Tarmudites leave the market."⁹

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz, Shabbos (6th of) Chanukah, Evening Rosh Chodesh Teves 5752)

6. *Vayigash* 47:9.

7. *Shabbos*, *ibid.*

8. *Mishlei* 5:16.

9. *Shabbos*, *ibid.* [*This is a reference to the passage in the Talmud that discusses the latest time for kindling the Chanukah lights; the rabbis declare this to be when the Tarmudite merchants would leave the market and no one else would remain outside. Chassidus explains that the word "Tarmud" (the name of a nation) rearranged spells "Moreds," rebel. Metaphorically this means that we will bring light to the outside to the extent of removing all resistance to the Divine. Translator's note.*]

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