

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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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** שתחיל
Shagalov

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Shagalov

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by
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

Chukas

THE RED HEIFER-PRELUDE TO MOSHIACH

There have been nine Red Heifers so far. The tenth, according to Maimonides, will be prepared by Moshiach. By recounting the history of the Red Heifer, Maimonides emphasizes its eternal relevance, even in the times of exile. Including a prayer for Moshiach in the laws of the Red Heifer reminds us to be “Moshiach-conscious” at all times, aware that until the Redemption we are incomplete and imperfect. The ashes of the Red Heifer, used to remove the spiritual impurity resulting from death, alludes to Redemption, the final and complete purification, the removal of any separation between G-d and the Jewish people.

This week’s Torah reading begins with the ritual of the *Parah Adumah* – the Red Heifer. One who had become *tameh* – ritually impure – through contact with a dead body could not enter the Temple. The ashes of the Red Heifer were used to purify those who had become *tameh*, enabling them to re-enter the *Beis HaMikdash* – the Temple.

Historically, there have been nine Red Heifers. The tenth will be prepared by Moshiach. Since everything happens by Divine Providence, the connection between the tenth *Parah Adumah* and Moshiach must be more than coincidental. Indeed, on an inner level, the mitzvah of the Red Heifer must teach us something about how to bring Moshiach.

Maimonides alludes to this when concluding the laws regarding the Red Heifer. He says that “Nine Red Heifers were prepared from the time this mitzvah was first commanded until the destruction of the Temple. The first was prepared by Moses, the second by

Ezra and seven from Ezra until the destruction of the Temple. The tenth will be prepared by the King Moshiach, speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d's Will."

If Maimonides is simply telling us about the mitzvah, why conclude with a prayer? We need to know the details of the Red Heifer's preparation and use, not its history. But not only does Maimonides tell us how many there were and who prepared them, he also offers a prayer for the restoration of the ritual. Maimonides might have to mention that Moshiach will prepare the tenth Red Heifer, since elsewhere he presents basic laws concerning Moshiach. But that still doesn't explain why Maimonides himself offers a prayer in the middle of a law code. Also, at the very least, this prayer – "speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d's Will" – belongs with the laws of Moshiach, not the laws of the Red Heifer.

We thus have three questions to answer: First, why does Maimonides recount a history of the Red Heifer? Second, why does Maimonides offer a prayer for the coming of Moshiach when discussing the laws of the Red Heifer? And finally, what is the lesson for us about Moshiach?

To answer the first question, we must understand what was done with the ashes of the Red Heifer. After the animal was burned, the ashes were divided into three sections. One section was used to purify kohanim who had become ritually impure – *tameh*. A second section was used to purify the rest of the Jewish people. Although they were not involved in the daily sacrifices, there were still times when an individual needed to enter the Temple. If he'd had contact with a dead body, he would need to be purified first.

The third section was set aside not to be used, but preserved, guarded and passed on. By giving us the history of the Red Heifer, Maimonides indicates that preserving the ashes is an eternal

obligation, applicable throughout all the generations. In addition to having the ashes available to be used when they were needed, there's a separate mitzvah that the ashes be preserved, that they simply be there. The "history lesson" tells us that the Red Heifer is not simply part of the past, interesting but irrelevant. Maimonides tells us that Moshiach will prepare the tenth Red Heifer to show that throughout history there was always an attempt to preserve and maintain the ashes. The Red Heifer is a continuous mitzvah, its relevance eternal and not limited to just one time.

Maintenance and preservation of the ashes of the Red Heifer is an eternal obligation. But this mitzvah cannot be observed until the coming of Moshiach. Therefore, the mitzvah of the Red Heifer "demands," so to speak, Moshiach. The mitzvah itself declares, "speedily may Moshiach be revealed," so that the ashes can be prepared. Only thus can the mitzvah of preserving the ashes be properly and completely observed.

We still need to answer the second question, why Maimonides offers a prayer in a book of laws. As part of the same question, why does Maimonides offer the prayer out of place, in the laws of the Red Heifer instead of in the laws of Moshiach?

Now, there is an obligation to believe in the coming of Moshiach. But the commandment is not to have just a generalized belief. Rather, we are commanded to hope and long for, to anticipate the coming of Moshiach. Anything less, Maimonides explains, is tantamount to denial of the Torah and the prophecy of Moses. The mitzvah to believe in, expect and prepare for the coming of Moshiach is thus eternally relevant and applicable throughout the generations.

What does it mean to expect, prepare and hope for the coming of Moshiach? This means one has to engender a feeling of incompleteness without Moshiach. One must feel he is missing something vital every moment Moshiach is not visibly, physically

present. We must have a continual hope and anticipation for Moshiach, because every moment Moshiach isn't here we experience a deficiency, sensing we lack something essential.

Therefore, when we encounter an idea, an event or even a law that relates to Moshiach, we immediately and automatically offer a prayer that Moshiach should be physically and immediately revealed. Because we feel incomplete and inadequate without the Redemption, whenever Moshiach is mentioned, even incidentally, we instantly – almost impulsively – pray for the reality of that for which we hope. When we want something, when we perceive we need something, when we feel this lack or insufficiency urgently, strongly and internally, we pray for it. We respond with anticipation and desire whenever it is mentioned, because our thoughts, emotions – our very essence – is connected with it.

This explains why the prayer for the coming of Moshiach, “speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d’s Will,” is included in a book of laws in general. This also explains why it is “out of place,” so to speak, put specifically with the laws of the Red Heifer. In this way Maimonides explains and emphasizes **how** to anticipate, hope and long for Moshiach. Even when the concept of Moshiach arises in a secondary, indirect or insignificant manner, we respond primarily and forcefully to the mention of Moshiach. We should be so focused on Moshiach, so aware that we are insufficient and incomplete without the Redemption, that even an offhand comment elicits a prayer, that “speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d’s Will.”

But why specifically here, in connection with the Red Heifer? This answers our third question, what is the practical lesson for today?

In general, exile – our current situation prior to Redemption – is an aspect of *tumas meis* – the spiritual impurity resulting from death.

Spiritually, we are exiled for our sins. These sins result from a lack of feeling, an insensitivity to the truth that, “You are attached to the L-rd your G-d.” Without that attachment – or awareness of that attachment – life itself is incomplete. We cannot be truly, “living, all of you, today,” unless and until all our inadequacies, our sins, our spiritual impurities are removed and purified.

Thus, the ashes of the Red Heifer, used to remove the spiritual impurity resulting from death, alludes to Redemption, the final and complete purification, the removal of any separation between G-d and the Jewish people. When we feel the need for Redemption so keenly that we respond to even the off-hand mention of Moshiach with the prayer, “speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d’s Will,” we reveal our innate longing for and inner attachment to G-dliness.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 28:131-137)

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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All the signs mentioned by our sages concerning the generation of "the heels of Moshiach" indicate that our generation is the last generation of exile and consequently the first generation of Redemption. This realization has been greatly increased through the enhancement of efforts to disseminate the Torah, Judaism and the wellsprings of Torah to the most remote reaches of the world, extending even to this "lower hemisphere," i.e. the Western Hemisphere, (as a result of the liberation of the 12th and 13th of Tammuz) over the course of the last 50 years

Consider this: If **at the beginning** of this epoch, my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, issued a proclamation that "Teshuvah now, Redemption now!" and testified that we have already completed all of our Divine service, and all that remains for us to do is to "polish the buttons" and "All of you, stand ready to greet our righteous Moshiach." How much more so, **at the end** of this epoch, there is absolutely no shred of doubt that the time of Redemption has arrived. To borrow a Talmudic expression: "All of the deadlines have passed."¹ Even Teshuvah (which the Talmud there states is a prerequisite for Redemption ("Redemption depends solely on Teshuvah")) has already been fully realized.

...Within our generation itself, there is an added innovation this year:

Besides that we find ourselves in literal proximity to the true and complete Redemption, in this year of "It shall be a year of miracles I shall show him," when the prediction of "As in the days you have departed from Egypt, I shall show him wonders,"² will be realized.

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. *Michah* 7:15.

And we have, in fact, witnessed "wonders" that testify that this is **"the year that the King Moshiach shall be revealed,"** and the **"time when the King Moshiach will come... and announce to Israel, 'Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived.'"**³ Further, these wonders and the announcement that "Behold, he (the King Moshiach) is coming,"⁴ allowing for the translation that **"he has already come,"** mean that we already stand on the threshold of the beginning of the Messianic Era as well as on the threshold of the beginning of the Redemption, the continuation and culmination of which shall occur imminently.

Since we are standing on the threshold of Redemption which will arrive imminently, it follows that the study of the Laws of building the Temple this year must be **of an entirely different order.** First and foremost, this study must be permeated with the certain awareness and full recognition that this study is not merely an "academic exercise," but it is **relevant for practical use for the very next moment.** For indeed, the "Future Sanctuary that we are anticipating has already been built and is fully developed (above and will thus imminently) be revealed and arrive from Heaven"⁵ **instantaneously!**

The attitude towards the study of these laws should be analogous to what was discussed in the recent past,⁶ that the special increase in the study of the teachings of Torah concerning Redemption and Moshiach should not simply serve as a catalyst to hasten the coming of Moshiach and the Redemption. Rather this study should enable us to live with and thrive on matters of Moshiach and Redemption. We should "live with the time" of the Messianic Era.

3. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu* 499.

4. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse.

5. *Rashi* and *Tosphos* commentaries to *Sukkah*, 41, end side a and in other sources.

6. Above, p. 49 and in other places.

This can be attained when one's intellect is filled with the comprehension of the Torah concepts of Moshiach and Redemption. This intellectual awareness then extends to and permeates one's emotions, and then translates into thought, speech and action consistent with this very auspicious period of time when we stand on the threshold of Redemption and we are able to point with our finger "Behold he (he King Moshiach) has come."

One might suggest an additional rationale for the need and the virtue of studying the Torah's teachings concerning Moshiach, Redemption and the building of the third Temple; as an entrance into the Messianic Era:

Although our Sages⁷ have declared that Moshiach will come "when we are distracted from his coming," this does not contradict, G-d forbid, **the need for thought and reflection of the most powerful order**⁸ on matters of Moshiach and Redemption. This means primarily thought and reflection that we are now standing at the very entrance of the Messianic Era, that "Behold he is coming," since all the deadlines have since passed, teshuvah has been done and all of the different aspects of our Divine service have been completed in accordance with the details mentioned above. The resolution of this apparent contradiction is that the term for distraction, "Hesech HaDa'as" (literally "removing one's knowledge") actually means "**transcending** one's knowledge."⁹ This implies that after one has allowed this matter of Moshiach to permeate one's intellect (by applying one's thought and constant reflection, etc.) one then reaches the level where this then transcends one's knowledge.

7. *Sanhedrin* 97a.

8. *Da'as*, the type of knowledge where "one binds his mind with an extremely powerful and strong bond; firmly attaching one's thought." - Tanya, end of ch. 3.

9. Tanya, *Igeres HaKodesh* (105b).

Translating the above into practical terms.

Despite the "uproar" associated with this matter in recent times within this year, the year of "I shall show him wonders," and after witnessing the wonders which testify that this is "The year that the King Moshiach will be revealed," we see how difficult it is to inculcate the awareness and the feeling that we are literally standing on the threshold of the Messianic Era, to the point that one begins to "thrive" on matters of Moshiach and Redemption...

The solution to this dilemma is **Torah study** concerning Moshiach and Redemption. For Torah - which is G-d's wisdom, and thus transcends the natural order of the universe - has the capacity **to alter** the nature of man.¹⁰ Even when one's emotions are still **outside** the parameters of Redemption - G-d forbid - (because he has not yet emerged from his internal exile), he can nevertheless learn the Torah's teachings concerning Redemption, and thereby be one elevated to the state of Redemption. One then begins to thrive on matters of Redemption, borne of the knowledge, awareness and feeling that "Behold he is coming."

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Balak,
17 (numerically equivalent to "tov-good") Tammuz, 5751)*

10. See the comments of our sages on the verse "*Lo'keil gomer oh'lye*" (*Talmud Yerushlami, Kesubos, 1:2*. See there for cross references. Cited in Halacha by the *Shach* (and *Shulchan Aruch* of the *Alter Rebbe*), *Yoreh Deah*, sec. 189:13(23)).

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