

# *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 Balak, 5784  
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ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד  
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Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

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*of*  
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by  
Rabbi Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann, Ph.D

# Balak

## COMPARING AND QUALIFYING MOSHIACH

*Traditionally, the prophecy of Bilaam is seen as a comparison between King David and Moshiach. At first glance, it would seem more appropriate to compare Moses and Moshiach, since both are redeemers of the Jewish people. However, in one way Moses is unique, while King David and Moshiach are comparable. Further, the prophecy of Bilaam contains four parts. Each part alludes to a different qualification shared by King David and Moshiach.*

This week's Torah reading contains the prophecies of Bilaam, the non-Jewish prophet. Bilaam was hired by the enemies of the Jewish people to curse them; G-d forced him to utter blessings instead. These blessings have become part of the lexicon and prayers of Judaism. Traditionally, one set of these blessings has been seen as a reference to King David and Moshiach. Bilaam prophesied as follows:

*I see him, but not now; I perceive him, but not in the near future.  
A star shall go forth from Jacob, and a staff shall arise in Israel,  
Crushing all of Moab's princes, and dominating all of Seth's descendants.  
Edom shall be demolished, and his enemy Seir destroyed.*

There are four parts to this prophecy; each part makes reference to both King David, the ancestor of Moshiach, and to Moshiach himself. Thus, the first part states: "I see him, but not now; I perceive him, but not in the near future." The phrase, "I see him, but not now," refers to King David; the phrase, "I perceive him, but not in the near future," refers to Moshiach.

We may immediately ask three questions: First, why are the

verses references to King David and Moshiach, and not to Moses and Moshiach? Second, why must there be an allusion to or source for Moshiach in the Torah itself? Third, why are there four parts to the prophecy?

At first glance, it seems better to compare Moses with Moshiach. Moses redeemed the Jewish people from exile, as will Moshiach; this King David did not accomplish. Indeed, Moses is called the First Redeemer and Moshiach the Final Redeemer. Also, the level of prophecy attained by Moses and Moshiach will be similar; while Moses is the greatest of the prophets, Moshiach will also be a great prophet, approaching the status of Moses. King David, on the other hand, had a much more limited level of prophecy.

However, making such a comparison misunderstands the role and function of Moshiach. It is true that Moshiach, like Moses, will redeem the Jewish people from exile; it is also true that Moshiach will be a great prophet, close to, but not as great as, Moses. Still, in his essential task, Moshiach most resembles King David. Therefore, the prophecy that tells us who Moshiach must be and what he will accomplish also speaks about King David. In this way, we get a foretaste of Moshiach, so to speak. King David is the progenitor of Moshiach.

The critical difference between Moses and Moshiach, and the crucial similarity between Moshiach and King David is – complete implementation of Torah. When Moses gave the Jews the Torah, they could not perform many of the commandments, such as the agricultural laws of the land of Israel. King David enabled close to full implementation and practice of the mitzvos. Moshiach will enable a full and total implementation. It is axiomatic, it is absolutely fundamental, that the Torah, its laws and statutes, are eternal. Torah cannot be changed; laws cannot be added or subtracted.

Because the accomplishment of Moshiach is the full and total implementation of the laws of the Torah, there is no requirement

for Moshiach to perform wonders and miracles. He may do so, of course, but that is not one of the tests. The ultimate test of Moshiach is his mastery of Torah, his absolute adherence to Torah, his ability to bring the Jewish people close to Torah and his ability to provide the security and the means by which **all** the mitzvos can be fulfilled. In short, the test of Moshiach is if he empowers Torah.

This was the accomplishment of King David. He was king over all the Jewish people; he completed the conquest of the land of Israel; he laid the groundwork for the building of the Temple; he therefore created the conditions for complete observance. The Jewish people could, for a while, observe **all** the mitzvos, fulfill the entire Torah. This will also be the accomplishment of Moshiach, but on a permanent basis.

Moses gave the Torah to the Jewish people. In that, he was unique; the Torah can be given only once. On the other hand, King David and Moshiach both enable the Jewish people to truly observe the Torah; King David did so only temporarily, and Moshiach will do so permanently and forever. Furthermore, in a real sense, Moshiach will not accomplish anything new. Rather, he will simply re-establish the kingship of David, as it was at first, rebuilding the Temple, gathering in the exiles, and restoring sacrifices and observance of all the mitzvos.

We now understand why the verses of Bilaam's prophecy are references to and a comparison of King David and Moshiach. We can also answer the second question. Torah must tell us who Moshiach is and what he will accomplish, because proper observance of Torah depends on Moshiach. In other words, Torah says, these are the mitzvos; this is how they should be observed; in order to observe them properly, you will need a king; you will know who this king is when he does the following; when the king creates these conditions, you will be able to completely, perfectly and truly observe the mitzvos.

Moshiach removes the servitude of the Jewish people, freeing them from slavery to other peoples and to foreign ideologies. Thus liberated, the Jewish people become totally absorbed and involved in Torah. Hence, denial of Moshiach is denial of Torah. And denial of Torah is denial of Moshiach. In this sense, the coming of Moshiach and the complete observance of all mitzvos are interdependent and synonymous. Observance of mitzvos are the result and purpose of Moshiach.

We can now explain the four parts of the prophecy. The Torah itself testifies to the identity and achievements of Moshiach. The test of Moshiach is Torah and mitzvos: does this leader, this prophet, lead the Jewish people to Torah and mitzvos? The four parts are the four requirements.

First, who is the person? "I see him, but not now" – refers to King David. "I perceive him, but not in the near future" – refers to Moshiach. The verbs "see" and "perceive" indicate that the leader must be recognized and identified as such. Thus, as Maimonides states, "Moshiach must be a king, from the house of David, expert in all aspects of Torah and mitzvos, like his ancestor."

Second, how does he lead the Jewish people? "A star shall go forth from Jacob" – this is King David. "And a staff shall arise in Israel" – this is Moshiach. The star guides and the staff compels; both are forms of leadership. Therefore, again quoting Maimonides, Moshiach will compel all Israel to go in the way of Torah and heal the breaches in its observance.

Third, how will he affect the nations of the world? Obviously, all opposition to Torah or subjugation of the Jewish people must end. Thus: "Crushing all of Moab's princes" – This is King David. "And dominating all of Seth's descendants" – this is Moshiach. Moshiach will fight the wars of G-d, successfully overcoming those who oppose the Jewish people or the Torah and its commandments.

The prophecy concludes, "Edom shall be demolished," referring

to King David, and “his enemy Seir will be destroyed,” referring to Moshiach. That is, the nations will cease to exist as such, for their sense of sovereignty and self-rule leads to a denial and defiance of G-d. Rather, the nations will recognize they were bequeathed falsehood and their leaders and prophets deceived them. Thus, the world itself will be perfected, and all humanity will serve G-d together.

Our belief in, longing for and study of the laws of Moshiach will lead to the day when all people, pure of speech, will call on the Name of G-d and serve Him with one purpose.

*(Based on Likkutei Sichos 18, pp. 271-284)*



## 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."<sup>1</sup> 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,"<sup>2</sup> will be realized.

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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.'<sup>3</sup> Further, these wonders and the announcement that "Behold, he (the King Moshiach) is coming,"<sup>4</sup> 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"<sup>5</sup> **instantaneously!**

The attitude towards the study of these laws should be analogous to what was discussed in the recent past,<sup>6</sup> 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.

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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 Sages<sup>7</sup> 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**<sup>8</sup> 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."<sup>9</sup> 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.

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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.<sup>10</sup> 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)*

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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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