

WHO BRINGS THE REDEMPTION TO THE SONS OF THEIR SONS

ומביא גואל לבני בניהם

We had three Avos – Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov. Yaakov had another name, Yisrael. Yaakov is from the word "ekev", "heel", which refers to his lower aspect. The name Yisrael refers the higher aspect of Yaakov.

Yaakov, from the word ekev, is referring to times in which we feel low, when we feel like we are at the "heel", the lowest part of the body. Yaakov had very difficult times in his life. For 22 years, he mourned his son Yosef, and his Ruach HaKodesh left him. Yaakov Avinu completed the avodah of the Avos; he was the completion of the Shechinah. Yet, the Shechinah left him for a while. This was the "ekev" aspect of Yaakov. The ladder that Yaakov saw in his dream also refers to his aspect of ekev, because the ladder was footed on the earth, and earth implies lowliness, or ekev\heel.

The "ekev" aspect of Yaakov also hints to the period of ikvesa d'meshicha, the "heels of Moshiach", in which the Jewish people will go through rough times. During ikvesa d'meshicha, we are in a period of "ekev" – we are at the "heel": the Shechinah has left us *[simply speaking]*. We are like Yaakov Avinu longing for his son Yosef; "Rachel died, and Yosef is not here."

"**Yosef**" is from the word tosefes, to "add", which alludes to the added spirituality we will gain with the coming of Moshiach. When Yaakov was going through a period of ekev, there was no tosefes going on. This is a description of ikvesa d'meshichah\the footsteps of Moshiach – as long as there Yaakov\ekev\heel\suffering in the world, there cannot be Yosef\tosefes\added spirituality to the world.

However, in reality, Yosef was not really gone, as we know. It only appeared that he was gone. Yaakov mourned him for 22 years, because he thought he was dead, but in reality, Yosef was really alive. It was just that he had temporarily descended to Egypt.

Since we come from Yaakov Avinu, we inherited his aspect of "ekev" – that we are in ikvesa d'meshichah; we are like in a state of mourning from all our pain and over the absence of Moshiach, the same way Yaakov was in mourning over the absence of Yosef. Yet, the power of ekev which we inherited from Yaakov can also help us realize that all of the suffering of ikvesa d'meshicha is only on the outside of things, and that it is not the true reality. We have to instead look at ikvesa d'meshichah as being a 'descent' in our spirituality, just as Yosef was in a "descent" in Egypt, and thus realize that we are not hopeless.

Yaakov Avinu implanted in us this power of ekev, to realize that all the suffering is only on the external layer of things. How was Yaakov able to give us this power, when Yaakov himself was going through a period of ekev\suffering\descent? How do we derive hope from the very power of ekev that Yaakov bequeathed to us?

It is because Yaakov's very mourning and suffering is what gave us the power to withstand the period of ikvesa d'meshichah! *[We will explain]*.

OUR AVODAH OF THE FINAL ERA

What is our avodah during this period of ikvesa d'meshicha?

Avraham Avinu personifies chessed. It is clear to all of us that the chessed of Avraham Avinu is beyond anything we understand about chessed. His chessed was endless, way above all our acts of chessed. Why? This is because the chessed which Avraham Avinu did was not as a purpose unto itself; rather, it was used as a tool to instill in us the middah of chessed. This is the meaning of the statement, "The Avos are the chariot of the world." Each of our Avos became an embodiment of the Shechinah. This is the difference between a normal act of chessed and the chessed which Avraham Avinu did. When we do chessed, we do not look at it as bringing the Shechinah onto the world; when Avraham Avinu did chessed, he viewed chessed as a tool that will bring the Shechinah.

There is a statement in Chazal, "There is no generation which does not contain the Avos and Moshe." Our middos are nowhere near as perfected as the middos of the Avos and Moshe, but we inherited their ability to turn ourselves into a tool that brings the Shechinah. It is not our avodah to try to have perfect middos like the Avos did; if someone tries to do this, he will get very frustrated. Our avodah is rather to realize that we are supposed to become a tool that brings the Shechinah to the world, through our acts.

"One does a lot, and one does a little; as long as a person does it for the sake of Heaven." Even if a person only does a minimal amount of good acts, he can do so with the understanding that he is a tool to bring the Shechinah.

From a superficial point of view, a person thinks that the previous generations were much higher in their comprehension and in their good middos, and therefore he gives up hope on ever trying to emulate the ways of the Avos. "After all", he thinks, "I don't have their heads, and I don't have their middos."

But the inner perspective is: the avodah of the previous generations, and the avodah of the later generation – including today's generation – are really one and the same! Our avodah is always to become a tool to bring the Shechinah.

To illustrate, if a person sits in a sukkah that is smaller than his friend's sukkah, does he get less reward for the mitzvah? No, it's the same mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah. The Shechinah comes to a small sukkah no less than how it comes to a large sukkah, as long as we built it with proper intentions.

When we learn Torah and do the mitzvos, we should not look at these acts as a goal unto itself. Rather, we need to realize that learning Torah and doing mitzvos are tools that bring the Shechinah.

If our avodah is essentially the same as in the previous generations – to bring Shechinah – if so, what is the difference between the previous generations and the latter generations? In the previous generations, they had to work a lot harder in their avodah.

When a person views religious life through a superficial perspective, he sees that we have many acts which we need to fulfill. But when a person has an inner perspective, a perspective of Torah, he can see how all the acts we do are all a tool that brings the Shechinah. In our current generation, our "tools" are smaller – therefore, our avodah is easier! In previous generations, their "tools" were a lot bigger, so their avodah was harder.

When the Shechinah left Yaakov Avinu for 22 years, this does not simply mean that he didn't have any

Shechinah. This cannot be, because the Avos were always the embodiment of Shechinah on the world. It meant that he lost his higher aspect, which is "Yisrael", and instead he descended into his lower aspect, "Yaakov."

There is no such thing as a situation in which we cannot have the Shechinah. As long as we work properly to be a tool that brings the Shechinah, the Shechinah comes.

This is the meaning of what we say in Shemoneh Esrei, that Hashem remembers the kindnesses of our forefathers and brings the redemption to the sons of their sons; וזוכר חסדי אבות ומביא גואל לבני בניהם. The redemption will essentially be the recognition that we really have the abilities of our Avos in us – the power to become a tool that brings the Shechinah, through our acts. (*Not chas v'shalom out of being haughty, but because we recognize that we come from our Avos*).

תפילה 025 - ומביא גואל לבני בניהם

THE FUTURE REDEMPTION, UNFOLDING

When a person hears about the idea of having a yeshuah\salvation, he tends to think of it as a matter of thought, but not as something that is practically relevant in his life. He thinks that the yeshuah will eventually come in the future, as we know and hope for, but as of right now, can it really be that Hashem is growing forth the salvation...? A person tends to be skeptical.

We must understand the following. When a person plants a seed in the ground, the growth process is of no use to him unless the ripe crop emerges. When Hashem constantly plants the seeds of salvation, though, even the planting of the salvation is already a kind of salvation. We are able to have some degree of salvation even if the total salvation of Moshiach hasn't yet come. When Moshiach comes, it will be the geulah shelaimah, the complete redemption; but we can still have a degree of redemption in our situations, even if it's not a complete redemption.

On the outside layer of things, there doesn't appear to be any salvation going on in reality. But in the inner layer of reality, the salvation is always growing.

When someone lives superficially, all he sees is the external layer of the reality in front of him; he does not see any salvation going on. He might long for the redemption, but as far as he's concerned, "Moshiach isn't here." But when someone lives an inner kind of life, although he lives here on this earth just like anyone else, at the same time, he lives in an inner layer of reality, in a world of inner solitude with the depths of his soul. In that inner place, he can always see how the salvation is being grown. He sees the ongoing salvation as something that not only exists, but as something that is revealed in the reality of his life.

When someone lives superficially – especially in our generation, where superficiality means that a person has no sensitivity whatsoever to spiritual feelings – then he follows the crowd of the rest of the generation, and he simply isn't sensitive to a deeper meaning of reality. If someone is aware of the inner layer of reality and lives with it, he sees how there is always a salvation taking place; he sees how the light of Hashem is constantly shining.

The Maharal says that in the era preceding Moshiach, there will be a "growth" of a salvation that we first go through. First we see the salvation growing and forming, more and more, until we finally merit the complete salvation, which will be the future redemption.

תפילה 044 - ומצמיח ישועה

Q & A: MASHIACH

PREDICTING MASHIACH'S ARRIVAL

QUESTION:

The Gedolim said that the Israeli government will not last for more than 70 years, because Mashiach will be here by then. It seems that the 70 years have passed, unless we count the establishment of the government from a later date. According to the Zohar, the chevlei Mashiach can last for 2 years once they begin, and it seems that the chevlei Mashiach have already begun....It would seem according to all of this that Mashiach is coming on a certain date....

ANSWER:

We await his arrival every day! After all of these calculations you may have to predict the day of his arrival, you must realize that Mashiach's arrival will come from a hidden and concealed place that is beyond all calculations. Therefore, you must put aside all of your calculations and instead have simple emunah, and simply awaiting his arrival.

TODAY'S AVODAH

QUESTION

10) The Chofetz Chaim wrote several sefarim on how to be worthy of the Geulah. Is that our entire avodah right now (*to do what the Chofetz Chaim says about doing teshuvah before the Geulah*) or is there anything else we need to do that isn't mentioned in the Chofetz Chaim's words?

ANSWER

Become connected to the shaar HaNun d'kedushah (*the 50th level of holiness*)!

HE FINAL TEST BEFORE MASHIACH

QUESTION:

After Mashiach comes, what will be the "final test" of the generation? Will it be that Hashem will let His voice be heard and each person will decide if he is prepared to listen to the voice of Hashem even though he knows he will die from it (*like by Har Sinai*), or will each person tell Hashem that he would rather hear the voice of Mashiach so that he won't die? If I have understood correctly from a derasha of the Rav that this will be the final test, what will happen to a person who doesn't want to hear directly the word of Hashem? If one doesn't pass this test, will he remain alive and he will just be on a lower spiritual level than those who heard Hashem's voice, or will only those who hear Hashem's voice will remain alive for the Redemption, while everyone will not remain...?

ANSWER:

That will be the inner aspect of the final test, but it won't necessarily appear that way. The final test may appear differently. The most spiritual parts of our being will remain to experience the Redemption, and all other parts of our being which are not as spiritual will be able to experience the Redemption only to the extent that we have underdone bittul (*self-nullification*) in those parts of our being. The process of bittul (*self-nullification*) will actually continue until the end of the tenth century. Refer to sefer Daas Tevunos (88) and onward.