
Sichos in English Classics 23

**On the Threshold
of the Redemption**



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IN PLACE OF AN INTRODUCTION

At the Shloshim of R' Yonah Avtzon A"H, Director of Sichos in English, a resolution was taken to reprint the original weekly Sichos in English publications.

To fulfill this, a weekly booklet including a translation of a *farbrengen* as it was first published will be distributed. Our intention is to reprint the entire set in the near future.

Following the Sichos we will include an addendum with pictures, notes, and insights into the process of its publication.

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THE INTRO TO THE ORIGINAL ESSAY PRINTED IN 5751 (1991)

Almost a year ago, the Iraqi army crossed the border into Kuwait. The concern and fear that gripped the world drew widespread attention to a now famous passage from the classic text, the *Yalkut Shimoni*,¹ whose details precisely anticipate this year's events in the Persian Gulf. The Lubavitcher Rebbe *Shlita* suggested at the time that this passage be publicized, and drew focus to its conclusion, which states that as these events unfold, *Mashiach* will announce to the Jewish people: "Humble ones, the time for your redemption has arrived."

In a manner that befits the verse chosen by the Rebbe as an acronym for the Hebrew letters that spell out this year's date, "I will show you wonders,"² we witnessed the progress and conclusion of that conflict. "Miraculous" is an understatement for the series of events in which the enemy of the Jewish people was routed and our people's safety secured.

In the aftermath of that conflict, on the 28th of Nissan, the Rebbe *Shlita* appealed to the Jewish people to "do everything you can to bring *Mashiach*, here and now, immediately."³ And on many occasions in the subsequent months, the Rebbe has emphasized the imminence of *Mashiach's* coming and the need to work toward that goal.

The present essay, adapted from *sichos* of *Shabbos Parshas Balak* and *Shabbos Parshas Pinchas*, clearly emphasizes the unique nature of the present times: "We are at the threshold of the Redemption." Calmly and without fanfare, the Rebbe *Shlita* informs us that the Redemption is imminent.

The Torah tells us that when Moshe Rabbeinu conveyed prophecies of redemption to the Jews in Egypt, "They did not listen to Moshe, because of broken spirits and hard labor."⁴ The nature of exile is such that it deprives one of the possibility of conceiving any other reality. But conceiving a different reality is precisely what the Rebbe *Shlita* is

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1. Vol. II, sec 499, commenting on *Yeshayahu* 60:1.
 2. See the booklet of this name published in Iyar (April) by Sichos In English.
 3. See the essay published by Sichos In English entitled "Helping to Bring *Mashiach*."
 4. *Shmos* 6:9.

suggesting to us now that we “live with concepts of *Mashiach* and redemption,” and that this awareness permeate our day-to-day conduct.

And through “living with the concept of *Mashiach*,” we will hasten his coming and bring about the era in which these three weeks of *Bein HaMetzarim* will be transformed from mourning — into the celebration of the Redemption. May this take place in the immediate future.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE REDEMPTION

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SEEKING PURPOSE IN THE EXILE

There are two approaches to the present period of *Bein HaMetzarim*, the three weeks between the Seventeenth of Tammuz and Tishah BeAv, the period which commemorates the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. One is to dwell on the awesomeness of those tragedies and the difficulties suffered by our people in the exile which followed.

The other approach, while not minimizing the extent of our nation's loss, puts the emphasis on the *purpose* of the exile. Heaven forbid to say that destruction and exile are ends in and of themselves. Rather, within the ashes of the Temple's destruction was kindled the spark of the Future Redemption.⁵ In an ultimate sense, this was the purpose of the exile — to prepare the Jewish people and the world at large for the higher and deeper level of fulfillment to be reached in that era.⁶

In the present age, there is no question that the second approach is more in place. Our Sages declared,⁷ “All the appointed times for *Mashiach's* coming have passed; the matter is only dependent on *teshuvah*.” And we have already turned to G-d with sincere *teshuvah*. Thus, speaking of the readiness of our generation, the Previous Rebbe used the allegory of a garment that is complete in all respects — “and all that is needed now is to polish the buttons.”⁸ And surely, the almost fifty years of vibrant Torah activity that have followed since that statement was made have been sufficient to accomplish that purpose.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF REDEMPTION

The imminence of *Mashiach's* coming is further emphasized by the events of the present year, a year in which we have seen the fulfillment of

5. See *Yerushalmi, Berachos 2:4; Eichah Rabbah 1:51*.

6. Note the explanations of this concept in *MiGolah LiGeulah*, Part I, ch. 2.

7. *Sanhedrin 97b*.

8. *Simchas Torah*, 5689.

the prophecy, “I will show you wonders.” For we have witnessed wonders of a unique and unprecedented nature. In a miraculous manner which followed the course predicted by the *Yalkut Shimoni*,⁹ a formidable enemy of the Jewish people was destroyed. And as the passage from that classic text emphasizes, these miracles are to occur in “the year in which the King *Mashiach* is revealed,” and that at that time, *Mashiach* will announce to the Jewish people, “Humble ones, the time for your redemption has arrived.”

We are standing on the threshold of the Future Redemption. *Mashiach’s* coming is no longer a dream of a distant future, but an imminent reality which will very shortly become fully manifest.

STUDY AS A CATALYST

For this reason, emphasis has been placed on the importance of studying about the Redemption and *Mashiach*.¹⁰ Such study will in itself hasten *Mashiach’s* coming.¹¹ Over and above that purpose, however, this suggestion is meant to be appreciated on a more personal level by each individual. The intent is that everyone, men, women, and children, should begin to live with the concepts of redemption and *Mashiach*; that these ideas should become relevant to us on an intellectual level; moreover, that our intellect should affect our feelings; and ultimately, that we should begin to conduct our lives in a manner which reflects how we are permeated with an awareness of the Redemption as an imminent reality.

ANTICIPATING THE BEIS HAMIKDASH

This concept is also relevant to the custom of studying the laws of the *Beis HaMikdash* during the three weeks of *Bein HaMetzarim*.¹² Our Sages¹³ relate that G-d commanded the prophet Yechezkel to teach the Jewish people about the structure of the *Beis HaMikdash* while they were still in the Babylonian exile. When the prophet questioned the purpose of

9. II, 499, interpreting *Yeshayahu* 60:1.

10. See *Sichos Tazria-Metzora*, 5751, and the essay entitled, “Bringing *Mashiach* Now,” published by *Sichos In English*.

11. *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Tzav*, sec. 14, commenting on *Yechezkel* 43:10.

12. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XVIII, p. 420 ff.

13. *Midrash Tanchuma, loc. cit.*

such study, G-d told him that He would cherish their study as if they had been involved in its actual construction.

At present, this study should be carried out in anxious anticipation of the *Beis HaMikdash* being rebuilt. One should not consider this subject matter as being merely theoretical in nature. Rather, just as when one studies the laws of the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*, one does so with the awareness that one will observe the *mitzvah* about which one is studying every day, similarly, in the present context, we should study the *Beis HaMikdash* with the awareness that in the very near future, we will see what we are studying about in actual reality.

THE ULTIMATE SIYUM

The above is also relevant in regard to another custom of *Bein HaMetzarim*. During the nine days concluding with the fast of *Tishah BeAv*¹⁴ it is customary to hold *siyumim*,¹⁵ i.e., festive gatherings marking the conclusion of the study of Talmudic tractates. These gatherings should be held with the recognition that we are approaching another *siyum*, the conclusion of the exile.

And through these endeavors, we will merit the fulfillment of the prophecy¹⁶ that in the era of the Redemption, all the commemorative fasts will be transformed into holidays and festive occasions,¹⁷ when together with the entire Jewish people, we will proceed from exile to redemption. May this take place in the immediate future.

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14. Similarly, a *siyum* should be held on the fast of *Tishah BeAv* itself, concluding Tractate *Moed Katan* whose study is permitted on that day.
 15. The day on which a tractate is concluded is transformed into a “festive day for the Sages” (*Shabbos* 118b). See also *Rama, Yoreh Deah* 246:26, and *Baer Heitev* there. Indeed, even meat and wine are permitted on such occasions during the “Nine Days” (cf. *Rama, Orach Chayim* 551:10). The Rebbe Rashab used to hold *siyumim* during these days, though the meals which honored them included neither wine nor meat (*Sefer HaMinhagim*, in the section on The Three Weeks and Public Fasts). See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XXIII, p. 223, and footnotes 84-86.
 16. *Zechariah* 8:19, quoted by the *Rambam, Mishneh Torah*, at the conclusion of *Hilchos Taanis*.
 17. We experience a foretaste of such a transformation this year, when the dates of the Seventeenth of Tammuz and *Tishah BeAv* fall on *Shabbos*. Accordingly, each of these fasts is postponed until the following day, and the actual date of the calamity is commemorated, not with mourning and fasting as in other years, but with the pleasure and joy of the *Shabbos*.

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