

The Year Moshiach is Revealed

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In the ancient collection of Midrashim called the “Yalkut Shimoni”, there is an interesting Midrash that describes “the year in which King Moshiach is revealed”.

In the year in which the King Moshiach is revealed, all the kings of the nations of the world are provoking one another, the king of Paras provokes an Arab king and the Arab king goes to Aram to take counsel from them [...] and all the nations of the world are distressed and panicking [...] and Israel are distressed and panicking [...] and He says to them ‘My children, don’t be afraid, all that I have done I did not do except for your sake; What are you afraid of? Do not fear, the time of your redemption has arrived[...]’The Rabbis taught that in the hour in which the King Moshiach comes he stands on the roof of the Bais Hamikdash and he announces to Israel and says ‘humble ones, the time of your redemption has arrived...’ (See Appendix I for full translation)

Midrash Yalkut Shimoni: Foretelling a war with Iran?

The above-mentioned Midrash in the Yalkut Shimoni is particularly noteworthy because it mentions the king of Paras (which is Persia, the empire that included present-day Iran and Iraq), the king of Aram (the Western nations), and the assurance made to the Jewish people not to be afraid during these events, because “the time of your redemption has arrived”.

Given the ongoing tension between Iran and the West, as well as Israel, it is compelling to say that this Midrash is describing an end-of-days war with Iran (Paras) and the West, a war which brings fear to the entire world, but which culminates in the revelation of Moshiach. But in order to understand better the meaning of this Midrash in relation to the present, we should reflect back to the first Persian Gulf War (“Operation Desert Storm”), which took place in 1991 (5751 on the Jewish calendar). In that year, the Lubavitcher Rebbe spoke publically on the subject and he explicitly connected this very Yalkut Shimoni to the events in the Gulf; not once or twice, but on nearly 20 different public occasions.

The Rebbe: Yalkut Shimoni refers to the Gulf War

In those talks, the Rebbe stated in unmistakable language that this Midrash was in fact describing the events of the Persian Gulf War, and that 5751 (1991) was going to be--and in fact was-- “the year in which the King Moshiach is revealed”.

Among the elements in the Yalkut Shimoni that were emphasized by the Rebbe over those months:

- “Paras” refers to the “territory that includes Iraq” and “Aram” refers to the super-powers, and the sign of Moshiach’s coming--“nations provoking one another”--was fulfilled through the events of 5751 (1991);
- The main emphasis in this Midrash is the assurance to the Jewish people “do not be afraid” and “do not fear” because “the time of your redemption has arrived”;
- The description of Moshiach standing atop the roof of the Beis Hamikdash and announcing to the Jewish people “the time of your redemption has arrived” was taking place at that time.

In addition to saying that the events of that year fulfilled the words of the Midrash, the Rebbe showed hints in the Torah that the year 5751 was indeed the year that Moshiach would be revealed (see Appendix II). Not only *would* be

revealed, but that indeed these events “testify that this is ‘the year in which King Moshiach is revealed’”, even though “there is a difficulty to internalize this recognition and feeling that we are standing on the edge of the days of Moshiach”.

This raises an obvious question for us: how could 5751 (1991) be the “year in which King Moshiach is revealed” and yet Moshiach still hasn’t come?! It would seem obvious that the fact that Moshiach hasn’t yet come is a blatant contradiction to saying that Moshiach was revealed in 5751!!

Moshiach was revealed...and still Moshiach didn’t come?

Regarding this logical question, it will help to take a look at the Ohr Hachama, the commentary of R’ Avraham Azulai, z”l, on the Zohar:

[...]so to it will be with the Moshiach after he merits to that neshoma and recognizes himself that he is Moshiach, as it states [in the Zohar] Moshiach will be revealed but he still won't be recognized by the rest of the people[...]. (Shemos 7b, quoting R' Chayim Vital, z"l)

This describes how the initial “revelation” of Moshiach is when the neshoma of Moshiach is revealed to the individual who has been chosen by Hashem to be Moshiach. At the time that this individual receives the neshoma of Moshiach it is a private revelation, “but the rest of humanity will not recognize him”; only later will he be revealed to the people as Moshiach—what we refer to as the “coming of Moshiach”.

The reason for this “delay” is found in the Ohr Hachama on Shemos 9a, where it states that “*Moshiach can't redeem Israel from below...only from Above...there needs to be an awakening from below in order to awaken the rachamim from Above, even if the physical Moshiach wants to redeem [them].*” This describes a situation where there already exists the “physical Moshiach” (i.e., the individual to whom has been bestowed the lofty neshoma of Moshiach) who himself knows that he is Moshiach, but the revelation to all of Israel has not yet occurred. We can see this in the language of the Yalkut Shimoni itself: the Midrash begins with “the year in which the King Moshiach is revealed”, and the Midrash concludes with “the hour in which the King Moshiach comes”.

The year in which Moshiach is *revealed* refers to the initial revelation, when there is still a need to explain the events of the world to the Jewish people, “don’t be afraid”, etc. The hour when Moshiach *comes* refers to that transcendent moment when the Jews themselves are able to actually see and recognize the light of Moshiach. In other words, the revelation of Moshiach precedes and is distinct from the coming of Moshiach. (And it is self-understood that when there is such a situation—a situation where the man who himself is Moshiach is the only one to whom this has been revealed-- then *only this man* is able to know and to inform others that “the year in which the King Moshiach is revealed” has been fulfilled, etc.)¹

War in Iraq: Continuing where we left off

Back to the question of how the Yalkut Shimoni relates to the international events of the present year: the belligerence of Iran, threats of war, and so on. It is an obvious political and military reality that the present Gulf War (which has placed a large portion of the US military near the borders of Iran) was intended to complete what was started back in 1991. In addition, there are some interesting hints that Divine Providence also views the present war in Iraq as a continuation of 1991. For example: the first Gulf war ended on 15 Adar (5751), and the second US invasion of Iraq

¹ Note the Rebbe’s statements that “The appointing of David, King Moshiach has already taken place[...].The only thing that is necessary is the acceptance of his kingship by the people.” (Mishpatim 5751); “Moshiach himself is literally present, existing now in the world.” (Vayera 5752); “We find ourselves already in ‘the days of Moshiach.’ We only need to open our eyes.” (20 Kislev, 5752).

began “the next day” on 16 Adar 5763 (2003); on that day, President Bush (Jr.) addressed the Iraqi people and concluded with an expression that echoes the Yalkut Shimoni, “The day of your liberation is near”; and in 5751 Rebbe instructed that a portion of one of his talks regarding the US war in Iraq be withheld from publication, explaining only that “*od lachazon mo’ed*” “these words will be applicable at a future time”².

It evidence is compelling that the present situation is a continuation of the events of 5751 (1991), and therefore a continuation of the Yalkut Shimoni.³ Therefore, it is important for us to internalize the message of this Midrash, since it applies to our time as strongly as it applied in 5751. This Yalkut Shimoni is telling us that regardless of any international instability that may develop (“nations of the world provoke each other”), and regardless of how it might look for Israel (“Israel are distressed and panicked and say ‘where will we go , where will we go’”), the message Hashem is sending is clear: “**My children, don’t be afraid, all that I have done I did only for your sake... humble ones, the time of your redemption has arrived.**”

And the Midrash continues with what happens next: “and if you don’t believe, see my light that shines forth upon you, as the verse states, ‘Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has shone upon you.’...in the same hour the Holy One shines the light of Moshiach and of Israel, as the verse states, ‘the nations shall go in your light and kings to the brilliance of your shining’...” In other words: the continuation of the events of 5751 lead to the coming of Moshiach and the true and complete redemption.

A War with Iran—Should We be Concerned?

As regards a response to threats of war, the Rebbe completely ignored the concept of danger and threat and repeated countless times that the Jewish people would enjoy special Divine protection. The Rebbe stated boldly that although the enemies of Israel plan their evil, “they have no substance, and they will not succeed in doing this, since ‘the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps’” (see Appendix II: #8, Bo). The Rebbe pointed out that the Yalkut Shimoni twice tells the Jewish people “do not be afraid”, thus emphasizing the underlying security we should have in Hashem at this time. Some excerpts:

- “The Jewish people have the special promise of the Holy One ‘my children don’t be afraid, all that I have done I did only for your sake.’[...]It is clear that ‘the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps’ in every place in the world where Jews are found, also outside of Eretz Yisrael.” (#7 Va’era)
- “[...]these events didn’t harm the Jewish people at all, for they are the *pupil of the eye of the Holy One*, ‘one who harms you it is as if he harms the pupil of His eye’[...]especially including the Jewish people who dwell in our Holy Land[...].” (#8 Bo)
- “Before the geulah the Jewish people dwell with *security* without fear from the fact that ‘the nations of the world are distressed and panicked’ because ‘the rulers of the nations of the world struggle with one another’, since the Holy One says to them (Israel), ‘My children, don’t be afraid, all that I have done I only did for you...’ (and it is repeated) ‘don’t be afraid, the time for your redemption has arrived’, ‘The King Moshiach...stands on the roof of the Beis Hamikdash and he announces by Israel and says humble ones, the time of your redemption has arrived.’” (#9 Yisro)
- “The Holy One says to Israel ‘My children, don’t be afraid (‘you should not take it to heart’) all that I did I did only for your sake, the time of your redemption has arrived’, namely, that the Holy One Himself is involved with the redemption of Israel.” (#17 Ki Seitze)

In fact, it is precisely when the Jews trust Hashem and do not fear (as we are instructed by Hashem in the Yalkut Shimoni), and instead Jews “add in their Divine Service in learning Torah and fulfilling its mitzvos[...]*automatically*

² “Od lachazon mo’ed” is a verse from Chavakuk 2:3. On these words Rashi comments: "In the future, at the end of years, a prophet will arise who will reveal a vision as to when the time of the fall of Bavel and the redemption of Israel will happen."

³ See Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson’s article: http://www.meaningfullife.com/currentevents/gulfwar/The_Kabbalah_of_Basra.php

causes stability in the entire world, in all the 70 nations of the world.” (#6 *Toldos*) It was this special protection, as promised in the Yalkut Shimoni, which enabled Israel to survive the Scud attacks of the Gulf War with what even the military experts called a “miraculous” minimum of casualties.

What is left to do?

To bring about this revelation of Moshiach is our responsibility. Let each one of us double and redouble our commitment to doing *everything* in our power to bring about the revelation of Moshiach—both in our personal lives, and our “professional” lives, and let us commit to encouraging those we know to do the same. We need to awaken within ourselves the latent yearning for the Moshiach and the “new world” that he will usher us into. This is the awakening from below that itself will enable him to redeem us. The Rebbe told us how to do this, and the key points are:

- Learning and teaching others about the subject of Moshiach and Geulah, especially as explained with the insights of Chassidus;
- Helping others recognize that Moshiach is active in the world, and that there is a mitzvah to accept his kingship (“place upon yourself a king”);
- Pushing our boundaries by taking on new mitzvos and doing them in the finest manner (hiddur mitzvah);
- Increasing the size and the frequency of giving tzedaka;
- Excelling in *Ahavas Yisroel*: the love of our fellow Jews for no other reason than because they’re a Jew;
- Informing gentiles of the Seven Noahide Laws which G-d Almighty commanded all nations of the world to observe;
- “Living with Moshiach”, so that we view every event in our lives as a part of the process of redemption, fueling our desire for the ultimate redemption rather than merely a more comfortable exile.

The sages tell us that Moshiach experiences terrible suffering until he is able to reveal himself to all of Israel⁴: *can we really excuse ourselves for making Moshiach suffer for even another minute?*

Together, we can bring about the culmination of the Yalkut Shimoni—Moshiach Now *in actuality!*

⁴ “...there are those who claim [in accordance with the 12th of the Rambam’s 13 principles of faith]—‘I await him every day’, and as regards [the rest of the 12th principle] ‘that he will come’, this is Moshiach’s business, and they are relying on him that he will come when he wants! What does this mean?! Moshiach wants what every Jew wants—that the geulah will come immediately! And if the geulah doesn’t come, the verse says ‘he bore our illnesses, and our pains—he carried them, etc, and he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities’, and as it says in the Gemara that Moshiach ‘sits among the poor who suffer ailments,’ meaning that the entire time that Moshiach doesn’t come in a revealed way in this world—he is a sick man, and he undergoes dreadful sufferings every moment, r”! If so, how do they dare to say that Moshiach and every Jew can wait a while until Moshiach will come?” (Sicha of the Rebbe, Ekev 5744)