



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT VAYAKHEL

Another Look at Redemption

Studies show that unpredictability is a significant factor that leads to discomfort. For instance, people may feel more stressed when there is a 50% chance of receiving a shock than if they were certain to be shocked [1]. Indeed, there is an irrational form of fear that plagues most, if not all, human beings: fear of the unknown. People generally don't like change, and the sheer thought of something radically new and different – as exciting as it may be advertised – carries a sense of dread and worry.

Now, of course, we all want the *geula*, with Mashiach and the Bet HaMikdash. Nevertheless, many people may sometimes find themselves quietly having thoughts of worry or concern over what exactly will happen in that era and what life will be like then, and those thoughts may damper or confuse the yearning for Mashiach, especially since so many details are subject to dispute among earlier Sages and everyone pictures the same thing differently due to various rumors, theories, and ideas they heard from different people. I once heard R' Joey Haber address this issue, to which he suggested the following.

If I told you that right now, the leader of the Jewish People and guide for the world could be David HaMelech; would you take it?

If I told you that right now, the governments, courts, and professors could stop spewing nonsense and instead teach morals and normal values; would you take it?

If I told you that right now, you can visit Jerusalem and instead of it being divided into 4 parts, it could all be under Jewish rule, where you can roam free with a *kippah*; would you take it?

If I told you that right now, you can visit the kotel, and instead of just seeing an ancient wall with Jews crying, there would be a whole magnificent edifice constructed of gold and silver, where you can open the door and walk inside; would you take it?

Final question: if I told you that right now, there could be a palpable, unbreakable sense of unity and love among every single Jew on the planet, regardless of their shape, style, or background; would you take it?

Think about each of these queries for a moment. Do these five things sound amazing to you? These 5 factors listed above are the main and clear realities of what Mashiach's time will look like, as the Rambam describes. This is evidenced from what our Sages instituted to be said in the *Amida* prayer 3 times every day. If you look closely, the blessings dedicated to praying for the *geula* reference these five outcomes. We say "את צמח דוד עבדך", referencing the restoration of

leadership to the Davidic Dynasty. We mention "השיבה שופטנו", returning a normal court system with morally admirable values. We recite "בונה ירושלים", beseeching G-d to rebuild and reunite Jerusalem. "והשב העבודה לדביר ביתך", we exclaim, begging Hashem for the rebuilding of the Temple. And, fifthly, in "תקע בשופר גדול" we describe a messianic era in which all the Jews across the globe are united with a loud and awesome shofar.

Especially with all the insanity in the world right now, where society has lost its mind and nothing seems to make any sense, these main 5 changes that are guaranteed to come along with Mashiach seem more appealing than ever. Chazal knew what to put in the Shemonah Esrei, fully aware that these five things are incredible realities to get excited for at any point in time. Don't worry about flying cars or crazy things that none of us can predict with certainty. Even regarding Gog Umagog ("Armageddon"), many rabbis believe that it already took place in recent wars such as WWI and WWII. All the other details and specifics are way beyond us and matters of great debate – not something for us to worry about. Our job is to do everything in our power to bring the redemption sooner and continue yearning for it.

I saw a staggering post from R' David Bashevkin that we can all take to heart. "A survivor was asked what her worst day during the Holocaust was. Her response was shocking. 'It was when I was liberated.' She was so sure that the liberator was going to be Mashiach and that kept her sane. When the liberation came with GIs and Hershey bars, it finally hit her that all her suffering was only part of the greater exile and that realization was beyond comprehension."

There is a famous story in which Napoleon Bonaparte had once passed by a shul on Tisha B'Av. He heard the wailing sound of mournful weeping, and he asked his aide why the Jews were crying in the synagogue. He was told that the Jews were mourning over the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. "How long ago was that?" he had asked, and was told it had been roughly 1,700 years. Napoleon then remarked, "And they're still crying about it 1,700 years later?! A nation that mourns like that will surely return to its land and see their Temple rebuilt." [2]

[1] <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20211022-why-were-so-terrified-of-the-unknown>

[2] <https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/articles/2016/12/15/even-napoleon-could-see-the-temple-would-be-rebuilt/>

"If everything around you seems dark, it's Hashem's way of telling you to become the light." (R' Shmuel Reichman)