

Good Shabbos Everyone. Many people say "Next Year in Jerusalem... and the year after that, how about a cruise?" "Next Year in Jerusalem" does not refer to vacation plans. Next Year in Jerusalem means that we must believe that Moshiach will come at any minute and redeem us.

The Rabbis tell us that Hashem actually intended man to live a life of total enjoyment in the paradise of the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, we were temporarily banished from paradise after the sin of Odam and Chava. Even so, Hashem has promised us that our final destiny is to once again experience the happiness and tranquility of the Garden of Eden. (When Moshiach Comes, R.Y. Chayoun, R.Y.M.Rappaport trans.) The coming of Moshiach is an important milestone in our road back to the Garden of Eden.

Belief in Moshiach is a basic point of belief in our religion. As we recite daily in the 13 Principles of Faith according to the Rambam: "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Moshiach, even though he may delay, I anticipate his arrival every day."

The Torah speaks about Moshiach in our parsha this week Vayechi. As the verse tells us: "The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah nor a scholar among his descendants until Shiloh arrives and his will be an assembly of nations." (Bereishis – Genesis 49:10) Rashi explains that this verse is referring to Moshiach who will be a Jewish King from the tribe of Yehudah. When Moshiach comes, the Nations will gather around him to seek the wisdom of Hashem.

When Moshiach comes, the entire character of civilization will change. (Ibid, citing Rav Sadia Gaon Emunos ve'Deos 8:6) As we read in the Haftara for the last day of Pesach "The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie with the kid... They shall do no evil, nor will they destroy... for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of G-d, as the waters cover the sea." (Ibid, citing Yishayahu 11:6-9) The world will be a better place for everyone; suffering, violence, corruption, and evil will be replaced by universal brotherhood, peace and fellowship.

In 1777, Reb Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk led a large group of Chassidim to Eretz Yisroel, where they established a community in Tiberias. Some time after his arrival, some enterprising fool climbed up the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, and blew a mighty blast from his shofar. The simple folk who heard it assumed in their innocence that this was the long-awaited shofar of Moshiach, heralding the good news of the Redemption. But when the rumor reached Reb Menachem Mendel, he opened the window, looked around at the world outside, and said: "No. I do not feel that there is anything new in the air."

All of the strife in the world will disappear with Moshiach and the United Nations will be out of business forever. For this reason, we must long for the coming of Moshiach. The Midrash in fact tells us that "A generation which longs for the reign of Moshiach will be redeemed immediately." (Ibid, citing Yalkut Shimoni, Eicha) The Sages also teach us that when a Jew is called to give a reckoning of his deeds before the Heavenly Court at the end of his life, the first question put to him will be: "Did you anticipate the redemption?" (Ibid, citing Shabbos 31a)

Reb Moshe of Rozvidov, the son of Reb Eliezer of Dzikov, was once talking of Moshiach in the company of a group of his chassidim. They came to discuss the different dates of the arrival of Moshiach which had been calculated by various tzaddikim. The Sages tell us that the world will last for a maximum of 6000 years. Out of all the years remaining until the six thousand years elapse, there are certain times when Moshiach was predicted to come.

"Believe me, my brothers," said Reb Moshe, "that even if the nine hundred and ninety-ninth year of the sixth thousand year comes around and we reach sunset of the last day of that year, right before the last minute, and Moshiach has not yet come - I will not despair, G-d forbid. I will confidently await his coming." (Sipurei Chassidim al HaTorah, p.158, Reb S.Y. Zevin, R.U. Kaploun trans.)

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak, the Chozeh (Seer) of Lublin, was once discussing these same calculations of the arrival of Moshiach. Those who predicted when Moshiach would come often based their predictions on a verse from the Torah. The Chozeh commented that even though the predictions proved to be not true, the intentions of those who made the predictions may be understood, and even encouraged.

"Jewish Law," explained the Chozeh, "teaches that if a son sees his father acting against the Torah (heaven forbid), the son is not allowed to correct his father outright, because of the mitzvah to honor his parents. Instead, the son should show his father the law, and say: 'Father, thus it is written in the Torah.'

Certain tzaddikim would like to get the message across to our Father in Heaven that in their opinion it is time for Him to have compassion on His children, and to bring about the Moshiach. How do they go about doing this? They calculate some date or another, connect it to some verse in the Torah that speaks of the Redemption, and thus hint to the Almighty: 'Father, thus it is written in the Torah.' (Zevin, p.158)

We conclude with the blessing we say three times a day: "Sound the great shofar for our freedom,