

From the Writings of Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher z"l

The Four Stages of Redemption

When G-d sent Moshe to Egypt to free Israel, the Torah states, "And Moshe took his wife and sons and mounted them on the donkey" (Sh'mot 4:20). Why is it important that Moshe took his family on a donkey? Rashi makes a strange comment on this verse, "the Donkey that Moshiach will utilize to usher in the Final Redemption". How do we understand this odd comment of Rashi's? Can a donkey live for thousands of years? And why will Moshiach not drive a Lexus or a Volvo? What's up with the Moshiach and the Donkey?

The explanation is that Rashi is speaking metaphorically. Rashi means that when G-d appointed Moshe to be the Redeemer of Israel, He set those cosmic forces in motion that will culminate and climax with the coming of Moshiach.

Also, the pattern of the Exodus and the Final Redemption is the way a donkey walks, two steps forward and one step back. The road to Redemption in the Exodus and Moshiach's Coming is not straight forward. There will be many setbacks as it was in Egypt. Things did not go smoothly.

But the Final Redemption Process is moving forward and CANNOT BE STOPPED.

As the prophet Micha states (7:16), "As in the days of your leaving Egypt, I (G-d) shall show them marvelous wonders." The prophet's words imply that the Exodus from Egypt is the precedent for the Final Redemption.

The Midrash Tanchuma states, "Just as in Egypt, I (G-d) shall redeem you in the Messianic future and shall perform miracles for you."

Indeed, gradual, phased redemption is already found in Egypt, as in the four redemption expressions with which G-d addresses Moshe, "Therefore tell Israel that I am G-d. and I will remove you from the suffering of Egypt, and I will save you from your enslavement. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm. And I will take you to Me as my people I will be for you G-d." (Sh'mot 6:6,7).

These verses refer to the four stages of redemption. The first stage constitutes a lightening of Israel's physical hardship, although they continued to be Pharaoh's slaves.

The second stage constitutes the total cessation of their enslavement. Even so, Israel was not yet free but still under the control of the Egyptian King.

With the final plague of the killing of

the firstborn came the third stage, in which Israel was redeemed totally with great miracles and great judgments.

Yet Israel was still mired in the 49 levels of impurity. Finally, came the fourth stage, in which we were taken to be G-d's Chosen People.

At the time of the redemption, Israel was not worthy of it, and yet G-d still redeemed us. This is stated in the Midrash Sh'mot Rabba, "G-d said, 'If I consider Israel's deeds, they will never be redeemed. Whom shall I then consider? The merit of and the promise to their righteous and holy Avot.'"

It is Israel's lack of merit which delays redemption. Therefore, before introducing the four expressions of redemption, G-d says, "Therefore tell Israel that I am G-d." On this verse the Midrash HaGadol comments, "I (G-d) know that Israel will constantly rebel against Me and anger Me. Even so, I (G-d) shall redeem them for the sake of My Holy Name."

The redemption comes when Israel recognizes Hashem as our G-d, as occurred during Stage Four of the redemption process which was at the Sinai Revelation.

Yet the Torah goes on and brings a fifth expression of redemption: "And I will bring you to the land which I swore that I will give to Avraham,

Yitzchak and Yaakov. I will give it to you as an inheritance, for I am G-d" (Sh'mot 6:8).

From the redemption from Egypt we learn that complete redemption consists of the freedom of Israel ("I will redeem you.") and living in Eretz Yisrael, ("I will bring you to the land.") and belief in G-d and fulfillment of His Mitzvot ("I will be for you G-d") (6:8)

The Final Redemption will reach completion by a gradual process, like the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, the Zohar states that the Exodus from Egypt is the Road Map and the Long and Winding Road to the Final Redemption. **-ESP**

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH