

EXILE □ CHAPTER 5

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

First off, we've always been taught that our people *will* in fact be redeemed -- but under one of two different circumstances: either as a consequence of our having repented ... or simply because the time had come despite our hesitations, and what must be done will be done. We wanted to point that out from the first because many of us lose heart from time to time and wonder if we'll ever be redeemed. But know that we surely will; for geulah is our destiny, and it's a major factor in G-d's plans for us and the world.

Now let's lay out the process step by step. The first phenomenon to set it off will be "The War of Gog and 'M'gog".

The prophet Ezekiel depicted it as an awesome time in the future when "Gog would come against the land of Israel" and when "there'll be a great shaking in the land And all the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the beasts in the wild, the creeping things moving about the earth, and all people upon the face of the earth will tremble at My presence." But a lot will precede that. "All the mountains will be cast down ... all the steep places will fall, and every single wall will drop to the ground." But G-d warns us, though, that He "will call for a sword against (Gog) ... and every man's sword will be against his brother" (38:18-21).

Some background, though. Gog himself will be the leader of the country M'gog, which will have a mighty and noisome army. And he'll gather a great many other nations together to attack Israel. It's clear that Gog will be a Western figure, since we're taught that he'll also be referred to as "Romulus", one of the legendary founders of the Roman Empire (along with his twin brother Remus).

We know that Gog will attack modern-day Israel since it's reported that he'd fight against "the land that is brought back by the sword and is gathered from many peoples, ... which had always been a wasteland; but which will be brought out from the (other) nations" (Ezekiel 38:8). And we know too that his attacks will signal the beginning of the end --- "the latter days" (Ezekiel 38:16); and that G-d's wishes will begin to come to fruition then, for as He Himself put it, "I will magnify and sanctify Myself (then); I will make Myself known in the eyes of many nations and they will then know that I am G-d" (Ezekiel 38:23).

But the latter will only come about after a fierce and all-encompassing series of battles which Israel will win. Peace will finally reign, and the full redemption will begin to actualize in the end. A major misfortune of that battle, though, is the fact that Moshiach ben Yoseph (who will appear before

Moshiach ben David, the ultimate redeemer) will die in that battle. In any event, we no longer know which nation is M'gog, and hence we can't know who Gog, its king, would be either, till it becomes apparent by the fulfillment of the predictions.

Now, we could legitimately ask what this terrible war would accomplish in the end. For, couldn't the Moshiach appear outright without it? So we're told that the war -- and most especially the victory -- will serve to underscore a number of things: First off, that G-d does indeed reign over the earth. As it's said, "You (Gog) will rise up against My people Israel like a cloud overcovering the land ... so the nations will know Me" (Ezekiel 38:16), and "many nations will then know that I am G-d" (Ezekiel 38:23). Secondly, that Divine justice will always have its way in the end, and that the good will indeed be rewarded and the evil punished. And third, that those who had converted to Judaism for untoward reasons as well as heretical and terribly sinful born-Jews will be weeded out.

But make no mistake about it: the war will be horrendous and fierce. And yet it will prove in the end to have been for our ultimate good. For all the nations of the world will make a pact to destroy the Jewish Nation and Israel (G-d forbid!), as we indicated above.

We're also taught that at that time G-d will resurrect all the kings that ravaged the Jewish Nation and destroyed both Holy Temples and restore their offices; and that they will then all join together to wage war against the Jewish Nation, too.

And lastly, let it be reported that Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian relates, that he'd been told from Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman himself in London who'd been told by none other than the "Chofetz Chaim" (the great and holy Rabbi Yisroel Kagan, who was Rabbi Wasserman's mentor) that W.W.I was the first war of Gog and M'gog, that a second world war (which the Chofetz Chaim, who died in 1933, didn't live to see) would be the second war of Gog and M'gog; and that they will be followed by the third war which would be "a time of sorrow for the Jewish Nation, but which they'll be emancipated from".

This then will be the progression of events that will bring on the redemption as reported by our sages. We'll now present Ramchal's explanation of both what will have happened and will happen in the future from a mystical perspective.

May we catch sight of the redemption with our own eyes soon, and may G-d have mercy on us all!

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