

# IT'S ALL ABOUT REDEMPTION PART I

*by Rabbi Aron Tendler*

## The Meaning Of Redemption

We were created so that we can be redeemed. More accurately put, we were created so that we could attain redemption. That means that we all have a need to be redeemed regardless of when we have lived and what we have done in our life times. From the most evil to the most righteous, we all need to be redeemed. We were all created to be redeemed.

No one else is going to redeem us; it is up to us to get redeemed. In fact, there has never been redemption where someone redeemed someone else. If the redeemed was not independently deserving of redemption they would not have been redeemed. There is no free ticket or lunch on the redemption ride.

There is always someone or some others who are pivotal to the process of redemption. The Jews did not get out of Egypt on their own. They were redeemed through the good offices of Moshe and Aharon. Moshe and Aharon acted as the mechanism for freedom; however, the Jews were redeemed because of themselves, not because of Moshe and Aharon.

Throughout the period of the Shoftim (Judges) the roller coaster of our relationship with G-d was more than eventful. We sinned, G-d sent an enemy against us, we cried out to G-d to save us, He sent a savior. In each instance there was a person who acted in the capacity of savior; but the Jews would not have been saved if they themselves had not been worthy.

What do I mean by worthiness? Worthiness is an equation made up of ancestral merits (Zechus Avos) personal merits, and future potential. Just as Hashem (G-d) said to Moshe Rabbeinu at the Burning Bush, "The proof that it is I (G-d) Who has sent you to save the Jews will be when you bring them to this mountain to serve Me." "You might not understand why the Jews merit to be saved but I am not asking you. I am telling you to be the medium of their redemption because they have the courage and the conviction to willingly accept My Torah. (See Rashi) I am saving them because of who they will be, not necessarily who they are right now."

Redemption has always been up to us and us alone. We do not believe that believing in anyone else, alive or dead, equates with redemption. We must accept that our redemption is a reflection of our deservedness based upon the factors of ancestral, personal, and future merit (including repentance and change).

What does it mean that we were created to be redeemed?

The Medresh 1:4 states, "Six things were created before creation. Some of them were actually created and others G-d had in mind to create before He actually created creation. (In other words, the intent to create them predated creation itself. Meaning, they were not the outcome of circumstance and time; they were the reasons for circumstance and time.) The Torah and the Celestial Throne were created before creation. The Forefathers, Jewish People, Bais Hamikdash, and the name of Mashiach were the intentions that predated creation." (Meaning, they were the reason for creation.)

Our understanding of Mashiach (the Anointed - the Messiah) is that because of our sins we were exiled from our land and dispersed across the face of the earth. This exile has put the Jewish nation at the mercy of countless despots, criminals, and foreign powers that chose to persecute us and make our lives miserable. At some point in history, the Jewish people will have suffered enough, or gained sufficient merits to be released from the generations of enslavement and persecution and return to Eretz Yisroel (the Land of Israel). To accomplish this, G-d will send the Mashiach to gather in the exiled, rebuild the sovereign majesty of the kingdom, and create world peace.

For all intents and purposes, Mashiach is Plan B. It would have been far better if we had never sinned so grievously as to deserve exile and subsequent pain and suffering. It would have been far better if we would have never left the Promised Land and if the Temple had never been destroyed. We should not have needed a redeemer or savior!

The Medresh implies differently. The Medresh says that the name of Mashiach was among those things that were intended by G-d before He created creation. That Mashiach is one of the fundamental reasons why G-d created the universe to begin with. Mashiach was not Plan B if and when plan A failed. Mashiach is and was Plan A! It was always intended that humanity would require redemption! That means we were created in order to be redeemed!

Rashi (1:2) references the verse in 2:4 and the Gemara in Menachos and Berachos that explains the dual names, "Elokim" and "Hashem." "Elokim" denotes G-d in His capacity to be judicious and "Hashem" denotes G-d in His capacity to be merciful. As we have explained in past essays, merciful means granting humanity the gift of Teshuvah - repentance. On the other hand, judicious means granting the exact consequence demanded by a given action; meaning, no sin will go unpunished and no good deed will go unrewarded. The Gemara informs us that all good deeds will receive their just reward while a sin may not receive its just punishment. If the sinner repents the punishment is voided or minimized.

The Gemara tells us that at first G-d intended to establish the universe on the basis of justice. When He realized that humanity would never survive their failings and inevitable consequences He changed His mind and established the universe on the basis of mercy.

Whatever it means that G-d first thought one thing and then changed His mind (given that G-d

knows everything, cannot make a mistake, and has no cause to ever "change His mind") it is clear that creation assumed human failing and the need for redemption and salvation!

In the record of the creation of Adam (the first human being comprised of both male and female), Rashi (2:7) references the Medresh Tanchumah that identifies the source of the dirt used to form Adam. "G-d gathered the dirt from the place where the Mizbeach (the altar on the Temple mount) would one day be erected. It is as if G-d was saying, 'If only Adam will find forgiveness and be able to survive!' (The Mizbeach was a key component in seeking forgiveness through the medium of sacrifice.)

Whatever the Medresh means it is clear that from his inception Adam was assumed to need "forgiveness" in order to survive. In other words, humanity would have to have the mechanism of forgiveness (mercy) in order to survive their own failings and avoid the destruction that would otherwise be their punishment. That means that we were created to need and seek redemption

What does that really mean?

What is redemption? I would like to suggest that the first "story" recorded in the Torah, the story of Adam and Chava in Gan Eden, their encounter with the Nachash (serpent) and their sin, defines the meaning of redemption. Once we appreciate the meaning of redemption we will better understand why we were created to seek it and attain it.

In the beginning, at the moment of their inception when Adam and Chava radiated their pristine purity of purpose (the Laiv Tahor and Ruach Nachon) the Torah describes them as, (2:25) "They were both naked and they were not ashamed." Rashi references the Medresh that states, "They did not know to be modest which distinguishes between good and evil. They did not have an evil inclination until they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."

The meaning of evil is the imposition of a value and purpose that is removed from G-d's reason for having formed that creation. As new creations fashioned by the hand of G-d Himself, they did not know any other purpose except that which G-d dictated and established for them. As such, their bodies were tools fashioned by the Creator for the purpose and reasons revealed and yet to be revealed by the Creator. The notion of prurient desires that are self-serving and self-gratifying did not yet exist; therefore, their being unclothed could not have any "evil" value.

The idea of Tzniut (modesty), allows us to proclaim in deed and attitude the understanding that our physical beings have the potential to be used in the service of Hashem or in sole service to ourselves. The way we distinguish between the two is by being modest or immodest. Adam and Chava had no need to distinguish between good and evil because there was only good. Evil did not yet exist; therefore, modesty as we know it did not exist either.

Once they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, (3:7) Adam and Chava immediately realized that they were naked and they quickly sought ways to cover themselves. "They sewed

together fig leafs and they made themselves aprons."

From the moment that Adam and Chava sinned and the evil inclination was released they needed to seek redemption. That redemption was a return to the pristine purity of their inception. That pristine purity was the absolute acceptance of G-d's word as to the meaning and purpose of their creation and existence. Redemption is therefore the absolute acceptance of Hashem's word. Redemption is the acceptance that the only true value is G-d's intention for creating the universe, in whole and in part.

To be continued...

In the beginning G-d created separate and different creations. Each of these separate and different creations had its own assigned purpose in being created, and it is the universal responsibility of all creations to protect each others divinely ordained right to accomplish their individualized missions. If a creation hinders or interferes with another creation's purpose for being created, the interfering creation is opposing the established order of the Creator and His purpose in creating that specific creation.

The Creator provides all the necessary qualities and tools for each separate and different creation to exist and attain its reason for being created. Individual talents, rights, and ownership are the tools for accomplishing the Creator's purpose in creating separate and different creations. The need to protect these individual rights and qualities is as evident in the proper functioning of the complex ecosystem of our world as it is in the proper functioning of any human society. We must therefore conserve the natural resources of our world and cherish the right of all people to have what is theirs and be who they can be.

This mandate of "Intentionally Created Speciation" is a universal truth as stated throughout Parshas Bereishis. It began with the six days during which G-d created all things as separate and different, and concluded with the creation of man, woman, and Shabbos as the most different and the most glorious of all creation. It is our responsibility to embrace the reality of "Speciation" and acknowledge through our actions the Creator and His purpose for creation.

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