

Dreaming of the Great Awakening

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by Rabbi Ben Tzion Krasniansk

In a small shtetl in Eastern Europe in the late Nineteenth century this poor Jew suddenly withdrew the few dollars that he had in the bank. The next day the bank went belly up and all the wealthy Jews in town lost all their money. They were amazed, how could this poor Jew who knew nothing about finances have known that the bank was about to go under, something that had eluded all the mavens? They approached the poor Jew and asked: Tell us how did you know? He replied: I truly know nothing about finances but Friday before Shabbos the owner of the bank and myself were in the bath house and I over heard him say while sighing like only a Jew knows how to sigh, that Moshiach better come quickly. I realized that if this financial bigwig feels the urgency for Moshiach then he must be suffering terribly at the Bank. So immediately after Shabbos I rushed to pull out the few dollars that I saved up at the Bank!

The truth is, however, that Moshiach has always warmed the Jewish heart and inspired the Jewish soul. The Jewish people know how to long, to dream and to yearn, knowing that the day will come when the dream will come true.

The Torah tells us today that the first one to storm heaven and earth to bring the dream of Moshiach to fruition was Moses. The name of this week's Torah portion, Va'eschanan means to plead. The Midrash teaches us that in the Hebrew language there are ten expressions for prayers and supplications, and Moshe used all of them in his prayers to be allowed to enter into the promised land. The word Va'eschanan itself has the numerical value of 515 telling us the number of times Moshe prayed to G-d to have mercy upon him to allow him to enter into the land of Israel. Why was Moshe so insistent, because had he entered into Israel he would have ushered in the final redemption.

G-d had to order Moshe to literally stop praying in order that people shouldn't say, "Look how unyielding is the master and how adamant is the student."

Yet we find that twenty four centuries ago, the Rabbis of the Great Assembly instituted that we pray for the coming of Moshiach a minimum of eighteen times each and every day. Why, what right do we have to constantly petition and pester G-d with the same request, isn't it disrespectful? Yet the Rabbis institutionalized that Jews should relentlessly pray and question G-d's decision to delay Moshiach's coming.

Rabbi Moses Maimonides at the end of his Magnum Opus (Laws of Kings Chapter 11, 12) makes it abundantly clear that Moshiach is not a supernatural, other worldly phenomenon, rather Moshiach represents a perfectly natural state of events. It is the exile which comprises an unnatural reality. Exile in the Torah is compared to a dream state when we take leave of our senses, take a vacation from reality and dream up illusions. Moshiach is compared to a great awakening when we return to our natural reality.

In a very real sense Moshiach is not a change rather a return to a natural state of being. It is the status quo which is unnatural, an aberration and it takes a tremendous amount of

energy to maintain this distortion.

Imagine a world in which you weren't even tempted to act self-destructively because you keenly felt the power and the depth of your desire to live and be healthy. Imagine a world in which you were tempted to strengthen your relationship with G-d and you were repulsed by anything that could cause a disconnection between you and G-d because you keenly felt the G-dliness that's located at the center of your being. This is the world of Moshiach.

This is the world that every Jew believes in and yearns for with every fiber of his being and every bone in his body. It is this belief that has sustained the Jewish people throughout its long and bitter exile.

When you see a painting that's crooked it bothers your sense of esthetics and you straighten it out. There's no way that you will make the painting even more crooked because the sense of what's wrong carries with it inseparably a sense of what's right. If you had no clear image of the way the painting should be, you would never have been troubled by a sense that something is out of place.

Why is it that the Jew suffers from the exile more than anyone else and why is it the Jew's unique mission to bring Moshiach? Because every Jew has hard wired into their system a deeply ingrained vision of the way world could be, should be, and will inevitably become once again.

The Torah tells us how at the beginning of creation the entire world was in a pristine state, a veritable paradise. At Mt. Sinai for a brief moment the world once again returned to its natural state of perfection. Ever since Mt Sinai, the Jew has been charged with the Divine mission to restore himself and the entire world, through the study of Torah and the fulfillment of its Mitzvot, to its good and wholesome self.

Consequently, the Rabbis instituted that every Jew follow in

the footsteps of Moshe and on a daily basis storm heaven and earth and relentlessly seek out, pray and work towards the redemption. Even one extra moment of exile is unbearable and intolerable for the Jew. We are not asking G-d for a miracle, on the contrary it takes a miracle to keep up the distortion of exile. We are asking G-d to restore us to our natural selves, to help us get in touch with our true nature which is buried and submerged deep down inside of us. We are praying to G-d that our core and essence that our pintele yid or the Moshiach inside of us should emerge and surface and that we should experience the great awakening of the imminent redemption. Now!

“RabbiKrasnianski” <chabadues@aol.com>