

The Haste of Redemption

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

Many are the topics in Parshas Re'eh, including but not limited to: Moshe's urging to the nation to choose a life of Torah, which will yield Divine blessings; warnings not to stray after idolatry; the importance of serving Hashem in the place that He has chosen to rest His presence there; warnings to be on guard against a false prophet, one who sways his fellow Jews to serve idolatry, and an entire city that becomes wayward; the mitzvah to give tzedaka; forbidden and permitted animals that we may not, or may, consume; and the shalosh regalim. In regard to Chag HaPesach and the Korban Pesach, the pasuk tells us:

לא תאכל עליו חמץ שבעת ימים תאכל עליו מצות לחם עני כי בחפזו יצאת מארץ מצרים למען תזכר את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך
You shall not eat leaven with it; for seven days you shall eat with it matzos, the bread of affliction, for in haste you went out of the land of Egypt, so that you shall remember the day when you went out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life (Devarim 16:3). On the haste, בחפזו, with which we left Egypt, Rashi, quoting the Sifrei, comments:

כי בחפזו יצאת ולא הספיק בצק להחמץ וזה יהיה לך לזכרון וחפזו לא שלך היה אלא של מצרים שכן הוא אומר ותחזק מצרים על העם וגו'
For in haste you went out of the land of Egypt. The dough that you had prepared did not have time to become leavened, so this matzah will be for you as a reminder. And the haste mentioned here was not on your part, but on the part of the Egyptians, as the verse says, So the Egyptians urged the people to hurry to send them out of the land (Shemos 12:33).

The redemption from Egypt was in haste, בחפזו, which Onkelos explains as בבהילו. The Egyptians, suddenly, with an abrupt change of heart, after centuries of slavery, decades of oppression, and months of refusal, pressed and urged us to leave their land. And though the Israelites longed for redemption, perhaps when the moment came, they were as surprised as their slave drivers. For suddenly, the yad chazakah and zeroa netuyah was outstretched to save them.

And what was the ultimate destination, to where the nation would journey when they left the land of *every male that is born shall be cast in the river* (Shemos 1:22)? As Hashem promised Moshe, the first four lashonos of geulah, *and I will take you out, and I will save you, and I will redeem you, and I will take you to Me as a nation* (Shemos 6:6–7), would be followed by a fifth promise of geulah, through which our redemption would be complete:

והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ אשר נשאתי את ידי לתת אתה לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב ונתתי אתה לכם מורשה אני ה'

And I will bring you to the land, about which I raised My hand to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, and I will give it to you as a heritage; I am Hashem (Shemos 6:8).

This teaching, the haste with which the redemption occurred, should be a source of great chizuk for us all. Today, we are in a dark galus that seems endless. When, we wonder, will the redemption come? How, we muse, will it unfold? In what fashion, we hope, will we all return to our homeland?

While we continue to daven and yearn for geulah, we must strengthen our belief that when Hashem wills it, with great haste, it will occur.

In his annual teshuvah derashah, delivered in October 1970, **Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik**, the Rav zt"l, related the following:

"I heard from my father that Reb Chaim of Volozhin was once asked, '**How will the Messiah come?**' He responded: 'Let me tell you the following parable, and you will understand how the Messiah will come. On an ordinary weekday, I came home from the yeshiva after morning prayers. My wife asked me, "Chaim, are you ready to eat your breakfast?" I answered her, "Relka, I have not finished preparing my lecture for today, and I cannot eat until I review the texts that I have to teach in the yeshiva."

"All right, Chaim,' she says, 'let it be. While you are preparing your lecture, I will go to the market to buy a few things. In the meantime I will leave the soup cooking on the stove. Please be careful, Chaim, that it should not burn. Please be careful, I know you, and I am aware that you forget everything once you get involved in your learning.'

"My wife left for the market, and I opened my volume and started to study the appropriate texts. Suddenly, I look out the window and I see that the sun is shining with much greater brightness than ever before. What intensity! Then I hear the birds in the garden chirping a new tune, a stirring enchanted melody. I hear a commotion on the street. I look out my window and see Eli, the shoemaker, running and dancing. I call out, 'What is happening, Eli? Why is the sun so bright? What are these enchanting songs of the birds? What has happened to the trees that are suddenly blooming with new leaves? What is happening?'

"Eli looks up at me and says, 'Rebbe, don't you know? The Messiah is here!'

"Immediately, I run to my closet to get my Sabbath clothes to wear to greet the King Messiah, and I take out my suit, and to my chagrin the jacket is missing a button! Last Saturday night it fell off, and when I told my wife to mend it she said to me, 'Why the rush? You will not need it until the next Sabbath.'

"Now I have to go forth to greet the Messiah with my jacket missing a button. While I am debating with myself whether to wear this defective jacket or whether I can go to greet the Messiah with my weekday jacket, my wife comes running home. She breathlessly cries out, 'Gevalt, Chaim, where are you? The soup has burned! You forgot to turn it off!'

"At that moment, I say to her, 'You foolish woman, we are going to greet the Messiah and you are worried about the soup!? Go and dress in your finest Sabbath clothes and come with me to greet the King Messiah.'"

"This story, which I heard from my father [Rav Moshe, the son of Rav Chaim Brisker, the son of the Beis HaLevi], summarizes the whole saga of the redemption of the Jewish people. A Jew waits endlessly for the redemption, and then it comes unexpectedly. At that moment he discovers that a button is missing from the suit he has to wear to greet the Messiah" (*The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, vol. 2, pp. 134–135).

On the occasion of the first yahrtzeit of Hersch Goldberg-Polin, Ori Danino, Eden Yerushalmi, Almog Sarusi, Alex Lubanov, and Carmel Gat ז"ל הי"ד, we contemplate the darkness of galus and continue to beseech HaKadosh Baruch Hu to send the geulah sheleimah.

And when it comes, we will all put on our Shabbos finery and go to greet the King.

May we merit the ingathering of the exiles, the blessing of everlasting shalom for our land and our holy city, and the eradication of the evil that seeks to destroy us.

And on that great day:

וְהָיָה ה' לַמֶּלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ בְּיוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה ה' אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד

Hashem shall be King over the entire earth; on that day Hashem will be One and His Name will be One (Zechariah 14:9).

Fixed -

The Jewish Calendar Is a Calendar of Redemption

Excerpted, translated and adapted

Rav Yitzchok Kossowsky, Shabbos U'Moed Vol 3

Rav Kossowsky, my great-grandfather, was Rav of Ivey, Volkovisk and Johannesburg and brother-in-law of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski.

Israel and the Moon

The Jewish calendar begins with a striking choice. The great civilizations of the world measured the year primarily by the sun, and Rome in particular became identified with a solar calendar and with the world of visible political power. Klal Yisrael, by contrast, sanctifies its months according to the moon. For Rav Kossowsky, this distinction is not accidental. The sun represents visible and seemingly constant power, dominating the sky by day with a light that appears fixed and unchanging. This corresponds to the world of Eisav, the world of earthly strength and sovereignty. The moon is very different. Its light grows and diminishes, and at times it seems almost to disappear, yet its disappearance is never final. The moon returns and is renewed. That is why the moon is the more fitting symbol of Klal Yisrael. Jewish history does not move in a straight line of uninterrupted visible success. There are periods of greatness and periods of diminution, moments when the nation shines openly and moments when its light is almost entirely concealed. Yet concealment is not destruction. The moon teaches that something can appear to vanish and nevertheless retain within itself the certainty of renewal. Rav Kossowsky develops this from the contrast between Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov has a portion not only in this world but also in the World to Come, while Eisav's greatness belongs to the realm of visible temporal power. Yaakov may pass through night and concealment, but his future is not exhausted by what can be seen in the present. This is also the meaning of the familiar declaration associated with Kiddush Levanah

David, King of Israel, lives and endures Malchus Beis David may disappear from visible history, just as the moon disappears from sight, but it has not ceased to exist. The Jewish calendar therefore embodies a philosophy of Jewish history. We count by a luminary whose defining characteristic is not uninterrupted brilliance, but the ability to return after darkness. That is why the lunar calendar itself becomes a calendar of geulah.

The first mitzvah given to Klal Yisrael as a nation concerned the new moon

וְהָיָה חֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רִאשׁוֹן חֳדָשִׁים This month shall be for you the first of the months

Before Klal Yisrael left Egypt, Hashem taught them to look at a moon that had disappeared and recognize the beginning of something new. That connection is especially significant because yetzias Mitzrayim itself was the first great national renewal. A people whose existence had almost been swallowed by Egypt emerged again into history. The moon was therefore not merely a convenient astronomical clock, it was the fitting symbol of a nation whose destiny would repeatedly follow the pattern of concealment and renewal.

The Calendar of Redemption

The Torah later commands שמור את חודש האביב ועשית פסח להשם Guard the month of Aviv and make the Pesach offering to Hashem your G-d.

This is not merely an agricultural instruction or a technical calendrical rule. The Jewish months follow the moon, while the seasons follow the solar year, and since twelve lunar months are shorter than a solar year, Pesach would gradually move backward through the seasons unless an additional month were periodically inserted. The mitzvah of עִיבּוּר הַשָּׁנָה therefore ensures that Nisan and Pesach remain in אביב.

Rav Kossowsky sees within this halachic structure a deeper lesson. Pesach must remain connected to spring because the season itself expresses the meaning of geulah. Winter is a time when life is hidden and the world appears barren and dormant, while spring reveals that the life concealed beneath the surface was never extinguished. So too, Klal Yisrael may pass through periods when its vitality, glory and future are hidden, but concealment is not extinction. Just as spring follows winter, geulah follows galus.

The Torah therefore requires that the festival of yetzias Mitzrayim remain permanently attached to אביב. Every Pesach proclaims that the apparent death of winter is followed by renewal, and that the darkness of galus contains within it the possibility of geulah. The calendar does more than record Jewish history, it interprets Jewish history. Its structure teaches that time is not moving aimlessly. Every year is directed toward Nisan, and Nisan toward Pesach, the month in which Klal Yisrael first emerged from bondage and entered a new national existence. The Navi extends that first redemption into the future כִּי־יֵצֵא אֶתְּךָ מִצְרָיִם אֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם As in the days of your departure from the land of Egypt, I will show him wonders.

Yetzias Mitzrayim is therefore not only an event to be remembered, it establishes the pattern and promise of the future geulah. The command to preserve Pesach in חֹדֶשׁ הָאֲבִיב ensures that this promise is renewed every year. In this sense, the Jewish calendar becomes a calendar of redemption because it continually moves Klal Yisrael from concealment toward revelation, from winter toward spring, and from galus toward geulah.

The Added Month as a Model for Galus

The most original element in Rav Kossowsky's presentation is his understanding of the added month as a model for the experience of galus. Under the ordinary order of the calendar, Adar ends and Nisan begins, and the month of geulah appears to be approaching. Yet in a leap year, Beis Din inserts another Adar and Nisan is delayed. To someone waiting for Nisan, the additional month may appear to be an interruption. The calendar seemed ready to move into the month of redemption, but instead it returns to Adar and Klal Yisrael is asked to wait again.

In reality, however, the additional month does not obstruct Pesach, it protects Pesach. Without עיבור השנה, Nisan would eventually cease to coincide with Aviv, and the festival of redemption would no longer occur in the season commanded by the Torah. The added month delays Pesach only so that Pesach can arrive at its proper time. This becomes Rav Kossowsky's model for understanding the prolonged duration of galus.

There are moments when Klal Yisrael believes that Nisan must surely be about to arrive. The darkness has lasted long enough, the suffering appears to have exhausted its purpose, and everything seems prepared for redemption. Yet another interval is added. The expected Nisan does not arrive, and the nation is asked to endure what appears to be another Adar. The calendar teaches that such a postponement need not mean that the promised destination has changed. An added Adar is not the cancellation of Nisan, it is part of the calculation that makes the true Nisan possible.

So too, the extension of galus is not evidence that Hashem has abandoned His promise. What appears to human beings as postponement may be, within Hashem's hidden direction of history, part of the preparation for geulah. The idea must be stated carefully. Rav Kossowsky is not claiming that we can explain particular tragedies or determine why redemption has been delayed. He is drawing a symbolic lesson from the structure of the Jewish calendar. We see only that another month has been inserted, we do not see the full calculation.

The phrase סוד העיבור is therefore especially appropriate. The calculation of the calendar is itself a body of Torah entrusted to the chachamim, but it also becomes a symbol of the hidden calculation of Jewish history. Hashem knows how each additional interval contributes to the ultimate arrival of the appointed time. The calendar thus trains Klal Yisrael not to confuse delay with failure. An added month may feel like greater distance from Pesach, but in truth it preserves the possibility of Pesach. Similarly, another period of galus may appear to move history farther from redemption, while in Hashem's design it may be bringing the final geulah closer to its proper time. This is why Rav Kossowsky connects Pesach not only with the first redemption but also with the future one כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נפלאות Every properly established Nisan reminds Klal Yisrael that the first geulah established the pattern for the final geulah. Rav Kossowsky develops this connection between עיבור השנה, yetzias Mitzrayim and future redemption in the central portion of the essay.

The lesson can be stated simply. The additional Adar does not prevent Nisan from coming, it enables Nisan to come at the right time. So too, the hidden extensions of Jewish history do not erase the promise of geulah. Although their purpose remains concealed from us, they too fall within Hashem's calendar of redemption.

Why Preserving the Calendar Became an Act of Heroism

This understanding explains why the Jewish calendar became a battlefield during periods of persecution. The declaration of Rosh Chodesh and the intercalation of the year determine the dates of the Yamim Tovim, so without an authoritative calendar, Jewish communal life cannot function properly. Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot all depend upon the sanctification of Jewish time.

But Rav Kossowsky's point goes deeper. An enemy who attacks the Jewish calendar is attacking more than a system of dates. He is attempting to sever Klal Yisrael from its own sacred rhythm and from the hope embedded within that rhythm. Rav Kossowsky recalls periods when Jewish chachamim risked their lives to

preserve עיבור השנה and the fixing of the calendar. He describes the efforts made under hostile governments to maintain the correct determination of the months and years even when such activity had to be carried out secretly. Their concern was not merely astronomical precision. They understood that the calendar preserved the continuity of Jewish life and the nation's faith in its own future. This gives new meaning to the struggle over the calendar. The ruling empire might control roads, cities and armies, issue decrees and dominate the present, but it could not be permitted to determine when Nisan would begin. That decision belonged to the Torah and to the chachamim entrusted with preserving Jewish time. By safeguarding the calendar, the chachamim declared that the empire controlled only the visible present, it did not control the destiny of Klal Yisrael.

It could decree another period of suffering, force the proceedings underground and make the road to Nisan longer, but it could not abolish Nisan. It could not erase the promise of Pesach, and it could not prevent the moon from being renewed. This is where the opening symbolism of the sun and moon returns with particular force. The great empires lived by the sun and appeared to possess stable, unchanging power, while Klal Yisrael lived by the moon, sometimes diminished, sometimes hidden, yet always capable of renewal.

The empire's strength seemed permanent and Jewish existence seemed precarious, yet history repeatedly showed the opposite. The empires passed, while the Jewish calendar remained. The very act of calculating another month, establishing another year and preparing for another Pesach became a declaration that Jewish history had not ended. Another Rosh Chodesh would come, another Nisan would come, another Pesach would come, and ultimately the geulah represented by Pesach would also come.

Rav Kossowsky describes how the preservation of Sod Ha'ibur became bound up with the preservation of national hope, particularly when enemies attempted to interfere with the calendar and the observance of Pesach.

Conclusion

Rav Kossowsky's themes ultimately form a single idea. The moon teaches that disappearance does not mean extinction, עיבור השנה teaches that delay does not mean abandonment, and Pesach in חודש האביב teaches that darkness ultimately gives way to renewal. The chachamim who preserved the calendar under persecution demonstrated that these were not merely beautiful ideas, but convictions worth risking one's life to preserve. The Jewish calendar is therefore itself a lesson in emunah. Klal Yisrael counts by the moon because Jewish history is a history of diminution and renewal. The year is occasionally extended because even an apparent postponement can belong to the process that brings Nisan at its proper time. Pesach must always remain in אביב because the festival of geulah must forever be joined to the season in which hidden life becomes visible again. This is the deeper meaning of סוד העיבור. Just as the full calculation of the calendar cannot be understood by looking at one month in isolation, the full calculation of galus cannot be understood by looking at one generation in isolation. We may see only another Adar, while Hashem sees the approaching Nisan. The road may be extended, but its direction has not changed. The moon will be renewed, Pesach will arrive, and the promise of geulah remains alive. Rav Kossowsky concludes by bringing together Nisan, Pesach and Sod Ha'ibur as enduring signs of Klal Yisrael's future redemption.