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By the Grace of G-d
21st of Menachem Av, 5728
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your (undated) letter.

The first observation I must make is that whenever a question is to be discussed, there can be a meaningful discussion only if both sides accept certain premises as a basis for the discussion.

From your letter I see that we both recognize the Written and Oral Torah as undisputable authority.

Now it is clearly explained both in the Written Torah, as well as in the Oral Torah, that insofar as Jews are concerned, Golus comes not as a result of military circumstances, namely an outnumbered army, nor as a result of economic pressures necessitating submission to a stronger power, etc. Rather has it amply been explained again and again in the Chumash (including whole Sidras, such as Bechukosai, Ki Sovo, etc.) and in the books of the Prophets, and even more so in the Talmud and Rabbinic literature, that if Jews had always adhered to the Torah and Mitzvoth, they would have never been banished into Exile, regardless of the fact that "You are the smallest among the nations." For, Jews have always been outnumbered and outweighed in terms of military and physical strength, as King David puts it succinctly in one sentence, "These (come) in chariots, and those on horses, but we call upon the Name of G-d."

Conversely, when Jews forsake the Torah and Mitzvoth, G-d forbid, no power nor military might, nor political alliances, etc., are of any avail, as the Torah clearly states, "If you will walk contrary unto me, then will I also walk contrary unto you," etc., with the inevitable consequence of Golus.

In the light of the above, the true test of events, to see if they herald the Geulo or not, is to see whether there has been an essential change in the causes which have brought about the Golus in the first place, namely a new tendency in the direction of stronger adherence to the Torah and Mitzvoth. A further point is this: After the churban, when there could have been no question about the observance of the 17th of Tammuz, Tisha B'Av, etc., there were still a number of Jews who remained in Eretz Yisroel, and it was incumbent upon them too to observe all the matters connected with the Golus. As a matter of fact, those who remained in Eretz Yisroel and saw with their own eyes the destruction, would have felt the Churban and Golus even more. Let us remember also that the observance of Tisha B'Av, etc., was in effect even during the time of Gedalia ben Achikom, the Jewish Governor of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisroel, before he was assassinated by Ishmael (II Kings, 25:25)

As in the case of many other Torah matters, there are sources where they are explained at great length. However, inasmuch as not every person has the ability or patience to study these things at length in their original sources, they come also in a short and concentrated form. Thus we find also the subject under discussion formulated in succinct terms by the Great Teacher, the Rambam, who was not only the Guide for the Perplexed of his generation, but for the perplexed of all generations. In his Code Yad Hachazoko, he describes in brief but highly meaningful terms the state of the last era of the Golus as it would be, and how the beginning of the Geulo would follow. I will quote what he states, but in English translation, with interpolations to clarify the text, with some prefatory remarks, namely that it has been amply explained in the Written and Oral Torah that the Geulo will come through the Melech Hamoshiach, and as the Rambam also declares, simply as a matter of course, in the section which is the last of his entire Code, so that it is in a sense the very seal of his Code—the section of Hilchos Melochim. There, at the beginning of chapter 11, he states that the Melech Hamoshiach will bring the Geulo, and at the end of this chapter he describes carefully the order how this will come about. And since this is not a book on philosophy, but a code of laws, the terms used are carefully chosen and strictly to the point, without polemics or homiletics. This is what he states (Par. 4):

And when a king of the House of David will arrive, dedicated to the study of the Torah and observance of the Mitzvoth like his father David, according to the Torah Shebiksav and Shebeal-Peh, and he will compel all the Jewish people to walk in it and strengthen its fences, and he will fight the wars of G-d, he is assumed to be the Moshiach. [Note that this is not yet a *certain* sign of the Geulo, for all this can still take place in a state of Golus. However] If he did so and has succeeded [in the above matters, namely having won all battles and impelled all the Jewish people to study the Torah and to mend its fences, we are still not sure and require a further sign, namely], and built the Beis Hamikdash in its place [—clearly in the holy city of Jerusalem, indicating that there would be a large Jewish population in that city, yet we are still not certain of the end of the Golus, so a further factor must be fulfilled, namely], and he gathers in the dispersed ones of Israel—then he is certainly the Moshiach.

Surely no further commentaries are necessary.

I will only add a further significant point, namely that this ruling and Din of the Rambam is not contested by any *Posek*. Even the author of the Shulchan Aruch, who has written a commentary on the Rambam, including this very chapter, the well known "Kesef Mishneh" has nothing to question here, accepting it fully, nor are there any other *Poskim* who differ.

To be sure there are various homilies and references and allusions to the period of the Geulo in the Agadah and Midrash, etc., but these are homilies, and do not affect the *practical Halachah*. Even in the Halachah we find at first certain differences of opinion on different matters, in the Mishna and Gemoro, but once the final decision and Psak Din is arrived at, it is valid for all without question.

It is clear from the above Psak Din of the Rambam that before there can be a Kibbutz Golyos and the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash in its place, there has to be a full and complete return to the Torah and Mitzvoth while Jews are still in the Golus, and it is this that is the prelude and preparation for the Geulo.

I am aware of the fact that there are many individuals who wish to rely on this or that saying of our Sages, in the Tractate Sanhedrin or in the Yerushalmi and the like, in order to base upon it their views, but I have always marveled at the inconsistency of these individuals in regard to their entire approach. For surely the Rambam knew just as well those sayings of the Sages in the Sanhedrin or Yerushalmi, etc., and understood them at least as well as the individuals quoting them. The inconsistency is in the fact that these very individuals consider every word and expression of the Rambam's elsewhere as most meticulous, and study it with awesome reverence. Yet when it comes to this *simple and straightforward Psak Din* of the Rambam, they simply ignored it altogether.

The reason I have written at some length in reply to your letter (though this length is overly brief in comparison with the subject matter), is that it is simply painful to contemplate how misplaced the concern is of some well meaning individuals. Instead of each and every Jew, young and old, man and woman, dedicating themselves wholeheartedly to reduce and eventually do away with the causes which brought about the Golus, namely *Mipne chatoenu*—"because of our sins we have been exiled from our land," and what these "sins" are is clearly spelled out in the Shulchan Aruch—there are many Jews, undoubtedly with good intentions, who use all their energy and influence to find all sorts of means and ways of human invention to bring about the end of the Golus. This is doubly painful for, firstly, it is simply a deception of Jews to believe that there can be any other way of Geulo than that which G-d had specified, and secondly, while engaged in other ways and means in futile effort to end the Golus, they cannot engage fully in the true battle against the Golus in terms of the Psak Din of the Rambam.

May G-d grant that each and all of us in the midst of all Israel, should be inspired with true Heavenly inspiration to walk in the way of the Torah and to mend its fences, for it is *this* that will prepare the way for Moshiach to implement all the conditions necessary to bring about the truly full and complete Geulo.

With blessing,

M. SCHNEERSON