

# In an Instant

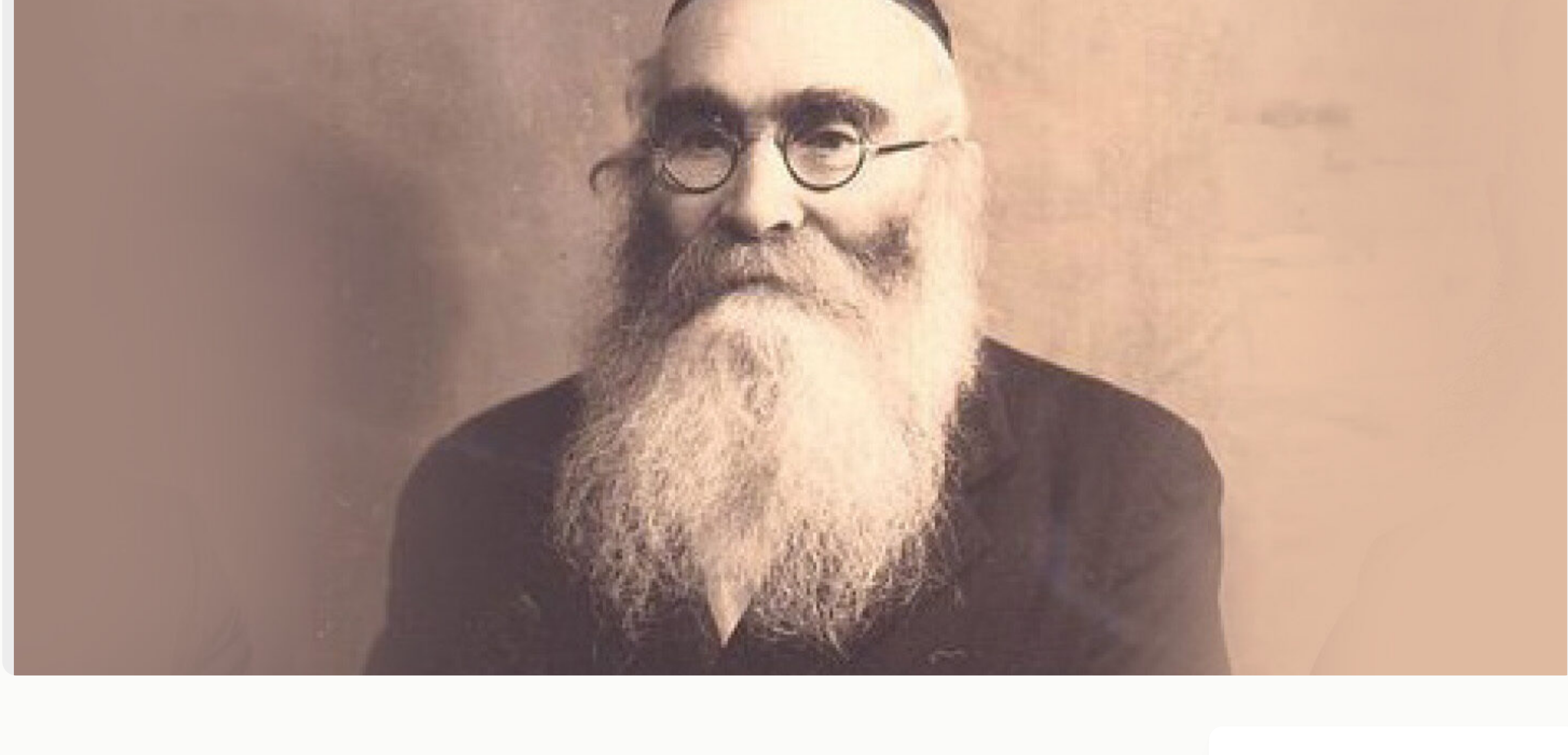
While we have learned that redemption comes in an instant, how do we manage the personal prolonged challenges?

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By Rabbi Moshe Walter

8 min read · August 5, 2026

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I often spend time speaking with those who are in chronically difficult situations — someone waiting “forever” to meet her *bashert*, a couple whose *shalom bayis* never seems to reach equilibrium, a bochur who can never find the right yeshivah, someone whose parents consistently badger him, a person who is “always” looking for a job, or the *mosdos* that never appear to succeed. These situations are painful and heartbreaking. How does one deal with an aching pain that doesn’t seem to ever go away?

This is a good time to address this question. As we emerge from the mourning period of the Three weeks, Nine Days, and Tishah B’Av, we reach the Seven Weeks of Consolation (Shivah D’nechemta). After weeks of focusing on ways to merit the return of the Beis Hamikdash, it’s incredibly hard emerging to a post Tishah B’Av world without the Geulah, without the Beis Hamikdash and without hearing the sound of the shofar of Mashiach, year after year. The endless, excruciating *galus* experience tugs at our heart. The ache never seems to want to go away. How do we move forward? How do we deal with this pain? Where will we find comfort?

Let us return to the end of Sefer Bereishis, to a very long and difficult personal exile: Yosef is in Mitzrayim, jailed, at the bottom of pit, far from his homeland, family, language, and nation. He finds himself in a present that is depressing and bleak and faces a future that seems grim and hopeless. Will he ever get out of this pit? How will he emerge from this disaster? Will he ever see the light of day again? I would imagine that these questions crossed Yosef’s mind as he spent his days and nights in the dungeons of Mitzrayim.

The Torah then states the following: “Then Pharaoh sent and called Yosef; and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh” (Bereishis 41:14).

If the *pasuk* is read carefully, there is a word that jumps out: “quickly.” Why does the Torah stress the fact that they brought Yosef out of jail quickly? What would be so important about Yosef getting out of the pit fast?

Listen carefully to the words of the Seforno on this *pasuk*: “This is the way of every salvation brought about by Hashem. It takes place, as it were, in a single instant, as it is said, ‘For My salvation is soon to come’ (Yeshayah 56:1). This was also the case with Egypt, as it says, ‘for they were driven out of Egypt’ (Shemos 12:39), concerning which Chazal said: ‘The dough of our forefathers did not have time to become leavened.’ And so will it be in the future, as it is said, ‘And suddenly the L-rd whom you seek will come to His Temple’ (Malachi 3:1).”

The Seforno is emphasizing a recurring pattern in Divine redemption, both personal and national. G-d’s deliverance often comes suddenly and unexpectedly, after a long period of waiting. Just like Yosef’s elevation from prison inmate to viceroy of Egypt happened in a single moment, quickly; and just like the Exodus occurred so rapidly that Bnei Yisrael were expelled before their dough could rise; so, too, will the future final redemption arrive abruptly. And so, too, one’s personal redemption arrives in an instant.

**How do we interpret** these words of the Seforno for our own lives? While we have learned that redemption comes in an instant, how do we manage the personal prolonged challenges? How do we, as a nation, remain focused and inspired to push forward in the dark and endless *galus*?

There is a plant called “Chinese bamboo” (even though it’s not really bamboo, and it doesn’t grow in China) that shows a fascinating characteristic. After its seed is planted, it seemingly lies dormant for four years, and does not begin to sprout until its fifth year. Then, suddenly, in six short weeks, it shoots up to a height of 90 feet, to become tall, strong, and firm. So, I ask you: How long does it take the Chinese bamboo to grow? If you answered six weeks, you are incorrect. The precise answer is that it takes Chinese bamboo five years to grow. Let’s explain.

What happens is as follows. The plant is watered, the soil is fertilized, and the area is guarded as the bamboo slowly grows an intricate system of deep and powerful roots over a period of five years. These small steps, which occur day after day, year after year, are what allow for the dramatic growth that only materializes years later.

In the Chinese bamboo lies the answer to our dilemma. Although redemption will come in an instant, we must continue to grow and develop stronger physical, emotional, and spiritual roots to prepare ourselves for the sudden redemption. When it comes, it comes fast — and we need to be fully prepared. In the darkness of the underground Egyptian tunnels, Yosef was preparing cognitively and spiritually, religiously and consistently. As a result, when his redemption arrived, and he was called for, quickly and suddenly, he was standing tall and strong, ready to grasp freedom.

Yes, redemption will come quickly, but we don’t know when. Yes, the redemption will come suddenly, but we mustn’t push it. However, we must be doing our job; the planning, the preparation, the work on the ground, and on all levels to be ready for that clarion call of the shofar to say we are ready. Whatever everlasting and perpetual challenging circumstances we face, we must keep preparing for that instantaneous redemptive moment.

Great Jews are always prepared for that moment. The Gemara teaches (*Shabbos* 153a), “Rabi Eliezer states: ‘Repent one day before your death.’ His students asked, ‘Does a man know the day on which he will die?’ Rabi Eliezer replied: ‘All the more should he repent today, for perhaps tomorrow he will die; hence, all his days are passed in a state of repentance.’”

Rabi Eliezer teaches us not to live with perpetual fear, but rather to live purposefully and with preparedness. Salvation comes in an instant, but we must always be preparing for that moment.

*Gedolei Yisrael* understood this and lived it. The Chofetz Chaim encouraged the study of Seder Kodshim, the laws of Temple offerings, to be prepared at a moment’s notice for the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash and the offering of korbanos. Rav Nosson Wachtfogel had his personal bags packed and ready by the door, waiting for the sudden sound of the shofar of Mashiach, to leave for Eretz Yisrael.

**Rav Aryeh Levin**, the Tzaddik of Yerushalayim, regularly visited members of Etzel and Lechi who were going to be executed. He was the last person these unfortunate prisoners in jail saw. What did he tell them? He taught them the words, “*Yeshuos Hashem k’beref ayin*,” the salvation of Hashem can arrive in an instant; be prepared, he told them; Hashem can change your fate in an instant.

The prisoners were uplifted by that message and asked Rav Levin what the source of this statement was. Rav Levin said it came from earlier sources, and he went home and searched endlessly for the source of this statement. While indeed there are sources in Rabbinic texts that hint to these words, the ultimate answer is that this is the story of Jewish survival and personal triumph.

Our nation’s survival after thousands of years of exile is due to our declaration of Ani Maamin, with full belief, that “even though he (Mashiach) may tarry, I will wait for his coming every day” — meaning, we continue to believe and prepare, forever, for that moment.

I know someone who is experiencing a prolonged battle with an incredibly challenging personal struggle. I am always amazed by his pleasant demeanor, upbeat attitude, and all-around cheer. I recently asked him how he manages to be so positive in such a long-lasting state of pain. Since then, I have not stopped thinking about his response.

He said, “The day will come when this challenge will pass and I will be okay. I want to be able to look back and say that I didn’t waste those opportunities to grow, build, develop, and live.”

We need to know, believe, and live with full conviction that both personal and collective struggles can change in an instant — *va’yeritzehu, pis’om, k’beref ayin*. In an instant! Let us make sure that we are living now, *b’chol yom*, with purpose, focus, and patience, growing muscles that will build us to be prepared for that great day, *sheyavo. Bimheirah!*

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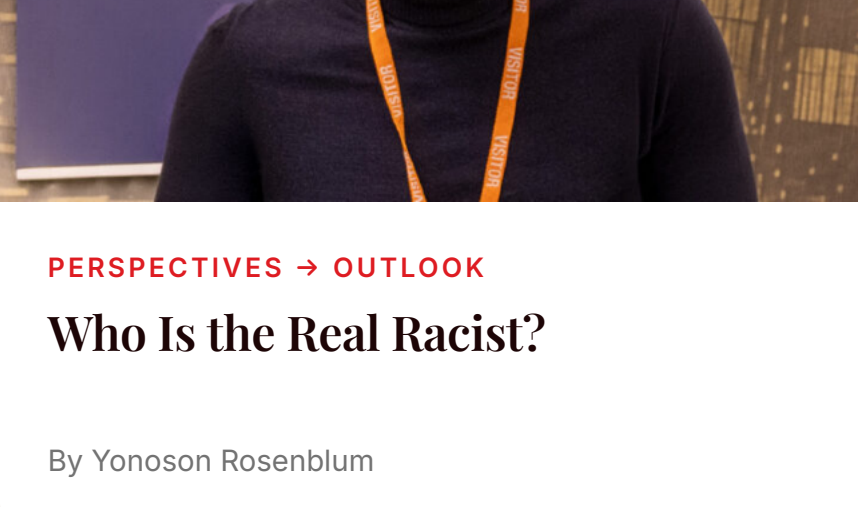
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