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The Heel

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In this [study](study.html) I would like to examine [one](one.html) of the [body](body.html) parts that exists at the lowest level of the [body](body.html), and is hidden from view, the heel. This lowly part has an incredible amount of meaning for those who long for the [Mashiach](mashiach.html).

# Introduction

Until the serpent committed the crime of persuading the [Adam](adam.html) and Chava to [eat](eating.html) from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the [Knowledge](knowledge.html) of Good and Evil, in the [Garden of Eden](eden.html), he walked about on [two](two.html) feet like man. As punishment for bringing man low, he was condemned to crawl upon his belly and to be in eternal mortal conflict with man.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 3:14-15*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou [art] cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the* [*field*](field.html)*; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and* [*dust*](rock.html) *shalt thou* [*eat*](eating.html) *all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy* [*seed*](flower.html) *and her* [*seed*](flower.html)*; it shall bruise thy* [*head*](body.html)*, and thou shalt bruise his heel* (eikev - **עקב**)*.*

This [first](one.html) use of the word *eikev*, (‘aqeb’) defines the [creation](bara.html) of the concept of the *heel*. When [HaShem](hashem.html) [first](one.html) [spoke](mashal.html) the word *eikev*, the reality was created for the very [first](one.html) [time](time.html).

Rashi also [teaches](teacher.html) that *Eikev* means *heel*.

**and you will bite his heel (ואתה תשופנו עקב):** Heb. תְּשׁוּפֶנוּ. You will not stand upright and you will bite him on the heel, and even from there you will kill him. The expression תְּשׁוּפֶנוּ is like:[[1]](#footnote-1) “He blew (נָשַׁף) on them.” When a snake comes to bite, it blows with a sort of hiss, and since the [two](two.html) expressions coincide [i.e., they sound alike], Scripture used the expression of נְשִׁיפָה in both cases.

This conflict is described here in the Torah as man’s efforts to trample upon the serpent’s [head](body.html) and the serpent’s efforts to strike at man’s heel. Hakham Shimshon Rafael Hirsch points out that originally the serpent did not crawl upon its belly, that [HaShem](hashem.html) altered its form following this episode. As well, He altered its nature. Ever since his fall, the serpent envies the upright position of man which he once enjoyed. Aware that he can never regain that position because of the Divine curse upon him, the serpent tries to do the next best thing to bring man down to his level by injecting his venom into his [body](body.html).

The heel contains a part of the [body](body.html) that contains *dead* skin that is so insensitive that it cannot feel anything of significance. On the other [hand](fourteen.html), that which is totally insignificant and trivial: tickling,[[2]](#footnote-2) that the foot can feel. This is an accurate description of our [generation](toldot.html): We are totally insensitive to the [spiritual](physical.html) reality. We are devoid of understanding or feeling, yet we are very much in tune with that which is totally superfluous, transient, and meaningless, that we can feel.

In the overall stature of Israel’s history, our [generation](toldot.html) is the very “heel”, the lowest part of the [body](body.html), while our predecessors are like brains, [heart](body.html), and other *higher* parts of the [body](body.html).

Our task and [mission](mission.html) is likewise the last, or *heel*, labor to complete and finish all that is still required to bring about the Messianic [redemption](redemption.html).

The serpent bit the heel and injected death into that part of the [body](body.html). From this point in the [body](body.html), death spreads until it eventually covers the entire [body](body.html).

Just like the [connection](connection.html) between [body](body.html) and soul, the soul’s [connection](connection.html) with the [body](body.html) is to the entire [body](body.html), including the heel. The heel is below the leg. It does not have the brains of the [head](body.html), nor the character traitsof the [heart](body.html), nor the ability of the [hands](fourteen.html). Even the [legs](body.html)’ ability to [walk](walking.html) is not in the heel, for it is possible to get around even without the heel. Life-force is not felt in the heel, which is why the *heel* is called the “[Angel](angels.html) of Death in Man”, in *Avot d’Rabbi Nosson*.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This struggle between [Adam](adam.html) and the serpent is typified in the struggle between [Yaaqob](israelja.html) and his brother [Esav](edom.html). The Torah records that the [birth](thebirth.html) of these twins was in such a way that the heel of [Esav](edom.html) was intimately involved:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 25:24-26*** *And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, [there were] twins in her* [*womb*](thebirth.html)*. And the* [*first*](one.html) *came out red, all over like an hairy* [*garment*](garment.html)*; and they called his* [*name*](name.html)[*Esav*](edom.html)*. And after that came his brother out, and his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *took hold on* [*Esav*](edom.html)*’s heel; and his* [*name*](name.html) *was called* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*: and* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *[was] threescore years old when she bare them.*

***Hosea 12:3-5*** *He took his brother by the heel in the* [*womb*](thebirth.html)*, and by his strength he had power with God: Yea, he had power over the* [*angel*](angels.html)*, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him [in] Beth-el, and there he* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *with us; Even* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *God of hosts;* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *[is] his memorial.*

The material [world](worlds.html) of *Asiyah* is at the *feet*, the bottom of the whole system of [worlds](worlds.html) upon [worlds](worlds.html) created by [HaShem](hashem.html) as a means of ascent for the soul. In this [world](worlds.html), the soul - [Yaaqob](jacob.html), is at the Eikev, “foot” of the universe. His [mission](mission.html) is to find Godliness even at the lowest levels of [creation](bara.html). This he does by viewing all things in the radiant light of Chakma (wisdom), represented in the [letter](letters.html) *Yod*, root of all the [twenty](twenty.html)-[two](two.html) [letters](letters.html) of the Aleph-Bet. Thus [Yaaqob](jacob.html)’s [name](name.html) is made up by joining the *Yod* to *Eikev* (the heel):

[Yaaqob](jacob.html) (יַעֲקֹב) = yod (י) + eikev (עקב).

*Yod* has a numerical value of [ten](ten.html) (10). Thus the meaning of [Yaaqob](jacob.html) is “[ten](ten.html) in the heel”.

[Yaaqob](jacob.html)’s [name](name.html) contains [two](two.html) concepts. His [name](name.html) begins with the [letter](letters.html) *Yod* the [first](one.html) and highest level of [HaShem](hashem.html)’s [name](name.html), (representing Chakma the highest of G-dly levels), and ends with the word for heel (eikev), the lowest of mundane levels. So low that it is as though dead.

The [name](name.html) [Yaaqob](jacob.html) also implies that the revelation of the Yod permeates until [one](one.html)’s heel.

When [Yaaqob](jacob.html) and [Esav](edom.html), the twins, were born, “The [first](one.html) [one](one.html) came out all red like a hairy mantle all over, and they called his [name](name.html) [Esav](edom.html). And afterwards his brother came out, and his [hand](fourteen.html) was holding the heel of [Esav](edom.html), and he called his [name](name.html) [Yaaqob](jacob.html)”.[[4]](#footnote-4) From the very beginning [Yaaqob](jacob.html) had his [hand](fourteen.html) (*Yad* = *Yod*, *Chakma*) at the heel of [Esav](edom.html), *Asiyah*,[[5]](#footnote-5) the heel and foot of all the [worlds](worlds.html). That was why he was called [Yaaqob](jacob.html).

In Midrashic tradition, [Yaaqob](jacob.html), who was also called Israel,[[6]](#footnote-6) represents the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people. His [first](one.html)-born twin brother [Esav](edom.html) represents the oppressive non-[Jewish](gen-jew.html) [world](worlds.html), especially the Roman Empire.

We are living in a period of history [known](daat.html) as the *Ikvata d’mashicha* - עקבות דמשיחא,the [birth](thebirth.html)-pangs of [Mashiach](mashiach.html).[[7]](#footnote-7) We are witnessing a [world](worlds.html) sinking to a level from which it cannot descend further. Depravity can go just so far before it devours itself; it will rot like a [seed](flower.html) until nothing is left.

"We are living in the era of *Ikvata d’mashicha*, not only according to the leaders of our [generation](toldot.html), but also according to those of the previous [generations](toldot.html)."[[8]](#footnote-8)

But from that putrefaction will spring forth a shoot of untainted and un-taintable [purity](purity.html).

*Ikvata* is an Aramaic word. It has the same root as the word for *heel*. Why should the [coming](coming.html) of the [redemption](redemption.html) be connected to the heel?

Every [generation](toldot.html) corresponds to a part of the [body](body.html). We are the [generation](toldot.html) of the heel. The heel is the lowest and the least sensitive part of the human [body](body.html). You can stick a needle in the fleshy part of the heel and not even feel pain.

If we really [knew](daat.html) what was going on in these last [generations](toldot.html), we would literally not be able to stand. [HaShem](hashem.html) in his infinite mercy has given us an insensitivity to [events](feasts.html) so that we can carry on.

In Israel, we are [sitting](mashal.html) on a volcano. And life goes on. Almost every day people die in violent and tragic circumstances. And life goes on. We don’t feel it. We just carry on.

Very soon, [HaShem](hashem.html) will bring the final curtain down on [world](worlds.html) history. It will be clear why every little thing had to happen in the way that it happened. We will [laugh](mashal.html) at what we thought was tragedy. Our [mouths](body.html) will be full with the [laughter](mashal.html)[[9]](#footnote-9) of recognition.

And then [HaShem](hashem.html) will take our hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh and [blood](body.html).

# The Dog

***Bamidbar (***[***Numbers***](nchart.html)***) 21:6*** *“And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *sent the fiery serpents amongst the people”*

A dog is not a very bright animal. When you throw a stick at it, it grabs the stick in its jaws and proceeds to growl and bite it. Who threw the stick doesn’t cross its little mind for an instant; it’s too busy punishing the stick for attacking it.

The [Talmud](orallaw.html) describes our [generation](toldot.html), the [generation](toldot.html) of the “footsteps” of the [Mashiach](mashiach.html), as follows: “The [face](body.html) of the [generation](toldot.html) is like the [face](body.html) of a dog”.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Yisrael Salanter explains:

*Dogs customarily run in front of their masters. To an uninformed observer, it would seem that the dog is leading while the master is following. In truth, however, we* [*know*](daat.html) *that the master goes where he* [*desires*](needs.html) *and even though the dog runs ahead, he constantly turns to make sure that he is headed in the same direction. If he sees his master make a turn, he will quickly change directions and run in front of his master on the* [*new*](new.html) *path that the master has chosen.*

*When Israel had proper Torah leadership, the Sages led and chose the path which all followed. But in the times prior to the* [*coming*](coming.html) *of the* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*, when Torah leadership is no longer respected, the* [*generation*](toldot.html) *is the* [*one*](one.html) *that chooses the road to be taken and the leadership is constantly looking at the people, checking to see where the people want to be led. The leader resembles a dog. Ostensibly they are leading, but in truth, they follow a path that is chosen by the people.*

When we find ourselves threatened and attacked by a hostile [world](worlds.html), rather than growl and bite at the stick, maybe we should consider *Who* it is that threw the stick at us in the [first](one.html) place, and why He is throwing it at us.

# The Lowest [Generation](toldot.html)

Our [generation](toldot.html) is called the “Heels of [Mashiach](mashiach.html)” and it is also for [two](two.html) seemingly opposite reasons:

1. We are the lowest [generation](toldot.html) with the [spiritual](physical.html) sensitivity of heels.

2. We are very close, on his heels so-to-say of these tremendous revelations.

Targum Jonathan, relates the following prophecy to the [Mashiach](mashiach.html) explaining: *But they will be healed in the footsteps [heels] in the days of King* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html).[[11]](#footnote-11)

Our master explained this as a hint to the comment of the [Midrash](orallaw.html) that the verse ([Psalms](psalms1.html)) “why shall I [fear](fear.html) in the days of evil that the [sin](sin.html) of my heel shall trip me” is referring to the days of [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) and Yom HaKippurim. Kind David is saying here that he does not [fear](fear.html) for his soul because of great [sins](sin.html), because he can gain [forgiveness](forgive.html) for those [sins](sin.html) if he repents for them with all his [heart](body.html). However, he dreaded the [sins](sin.html) that a person performs routinely and to which, as a result, he becomes accustomed, so that he does not even think about repenting for them. This is what was meant by “he shall bruise your [head](body.html)”, which means that when a person repents on [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) for his great [sins](sin.html) he bruises the [head](body.html) of the serpent, i.e., Satan, the instigator and seducer, and frustrates all his efforts. But [HaShem](hashem.html) tells the serpent “you shall bruise his heel”, which means that Satan is able to snare man in those transgressions that he does routinely, which are very difficult to repent of, because after constant repetition, the transgressions begin to seem as if they are permissible.

# Megillat [Ruth](ruth.html)

The Megillah [Ruth](ruth.html) opens, “*And it was in the days when the judges judged*.” Our Hakhamim explain, “*And it was in the days when the judges* were *judged!*” The times were filled with tremendous chutzpah. When a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) high school education was enough wisdom to belittle any Hakham and every Rosh Yeshiva. Not only this, later in the Megillah it says, *“[Boaz] went to lie down at the end of the grain pile*.” Our Hakhamim explain the times were rampant with immorality. Boaz slept by his pile so his grains would not be stolen for payment for the prostitutes. These lowly [signs](signs.html) of those times, canonized in a book of our Written Tradition, our Hakhamim in [Gemara](orallaw.html) [Sotah](hair.html) saw would be the [signs](signs.html) of the times of the footsteps of the [Mashiach](mashiach.html). Indeed, the Megillah ends with, “*And Jesse begot David*.” David, who would become King David, who would be the progenitor of the messianic line.

**Rabbi Frand**

The [Zohar](orallaw.html) comments on the verse:

***Bereshit 25:26*** *And afterwards his brother came out and his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *was holding on to the heel of* [*Esav*](edom.html)*; and his* [*name*](name.html) *was called* [*Yaaqob*](israelja.html).

The [Zohar](orallaw.html) states that [Esav](edom.html) is compared to the original snake (Nachash kadmoni). The force in this [world](worlds.html) that represents the original snake that tricked [Adam](adam.html) and Chava into [eating](eating.html) from the Tree of [Knowledge](thetree.html), the personification of that snake in this [world](worlds.html), is [Esav](edom.html).

How does the Torah tell us to deal with that original snake?

***Bereshit (Genesis)3:15*** *And you will strike him in the heel.*

Against the powers of that snake, you will not be able to make a frontal [attack](attacks.html). To be successful against him, you must grab him by the heel, from behind. This is the only way to deal with the snake and with [Esav](edom.html).

The [Zohar](orallaw.html) says that when the verse tells us here that [Yaaqob](israelja.html)’s [hand](fourteen.html) was holding [Esav](edom.html)’s heel, the Torah is setting the stage and is telling us how [Yaaqob](jacob.html) Abinu, in the [future](future.html), will have to deal with [Esav](edom.html). He is going to have to deal with him by attacking at the heel; he is going to have to deal with him, sometimes, deceitfully and surreptitiously. That is the only way [one](one.html) can deal with that snake.

This is what our Sages mean when they say (on the verse[[12]](#footnote-12) “With a pure [one](one.html), you show yourself pure; but with a perverse [one](one.html), you deal crookedly.”) that you cannot always be up front and straight forward with a person who is a liar. Even [Yaaqob](israelja.html), the man of truth, has a mandate from the Torah, that the way to deal with [Esav](edom.html) is by ‘heel,’ which is connoted in [Yaaqob](israelja.html)’s [name](name.html).

This, the commentaries say, is what the verse means when it says “And [Yaaqob](israelja.html) was an ‘ish tam’ (a man who was simple) who dwelt in the tents” [25:27]. It does not say [Yaaqob](israelja.html) was ‘tam’ (simple), it says ‘ish tam’ (a man who was simple). The former implies someone who is naïve, that is not what the Torah tells us about [Yaaqob](israelja.html). It says he is an ‘ish tam’, he has control over his ‘temimus’ (simpleness). He can control and use that simpleness. There are occasions when [Yaaqob](israelja.html) will be straight and must be straight. But he is also a person that can control his simplicity and [attack](attacks.html) at the heel, if the occasion so requires.

This describes the whole history of [Yaaqob](israelja.html) and [Esav](edom.html), and their respective descendants. There will be times in history that we as a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people will not be able to deal with the descendants of [Esav](edom.html) on a ‘[one](one.html) on [one](one.html)’, straightforward basis. We will have to duplicate the behavior of our father [Yaaqob](israelja.html).

# In History

There is a direct correlation between the “[body](body.html)” of history and the [body](body.html) of man, as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [**Millennium**](millenium.html) | [**Body**](body.html) **(Sefirot)** | **Patriarch** |
| 0000 - 1000 | Right Arm (Chesed) | [Avraham](avraham.html) |
| 1000 - 2000 | Left Arm (Gevurah) | [Yitzchak](isaac.html) |
| 2000 - 3000 | Torso (Tiferet / Truth) | [Yaaqob](jacob.html) |
| 3000 - 4000 | Right Leg (Netzach) | Moshe |
| 4000 - 5000 | Left Leg (Hod) | Aaron |
| 5000 - 6000 | Bottom of the feet (yesod) | [Yosef](joseph.html) |

Now, though the [sixth](six.html) [millennium](millenium.html) also corresponds to a [body](body.html) part with respect to the sefirot, it is already sufficient clear that moving through history is like moving from the top part of a person’s [body](body.html) to the lower part. And, if the year 6000 is the last year of history as we [know](daat.html) it[[13]](#footnote-13), then, sometime close to that year should correspond to, well, the “heels” of history, and what is referred to as, the “Heels of [Mashiach](mashiach.html).”

Kabbalistically [speaking](mashal.html), we are living through the [millennium](millenium.html) of history that corresponds to the sefira yesod, which means “foundation.” The [first](one.html) [millennium](millenium.html) corresponded to the sefira, chesed (kindness), and the following [millennia](millenium.html) corresponded to Gevurah (strength), Tiferet (harmony), Netzach (dominance), and hod (glory) respectively.

Translated into English, these traits mean very little, historically [speaking](mashal.html). However, Kabbalistically, they represent different parts of the [spiritual](physical.html) “[body](body.html)“, and therefore, different potentials available in [creation](bara.html) at the [time](time.html) that they are the basis for their particular period of history. For example, Netzach and hod represent the right and left leg. The role of the [legs](body.html) is to allow the [body](body.html) to move, to extend its influence. Chakma (wisdom), Binah (understanding), and [Daat](daat.html) ([knowledge](knowledge.html)) represent the brains of the [spiritual](physical.html) “[body](body.html),” and, chesed, Gevurah, and Tiferet represent the “right arm,” “left arm,” and “torso” respectively, all of which make the main part of the person and his influence.

Since yesod corresponds to the [sixth](six.html) day of [creation](bara.html), the day on which man was created, it is a trait that has special significance to us. Furthermore, just as the sefirot correspond to the [six](six.html) days of [creation](bara.html), they also correspond to the [six](six.html) [millennia](millenium.html) of history, which means Yesod, the [sixth](six.html) sefira (down from Chesed), corresponds to our [millennium](millenium.html). Understanding Yesod*,* therefore, is also a way of understanding the nature of our [millennium](millenium.html), and the challenges we [face](body.html) (especially since it was on day [six](six.html) that [Adam](adam.html) [ate](eating.html) from the Tree of [Knowledge](thetree.html) of Good and Evil).

If Yesod is the balance between the traits of Netzach and Hod, then it is the ability to “give-and-take” in a relationship. It is best expressed by the person who knows when to surrender himself to a situation, how much to do so, and for how long. He will only impose his opinion when doing so is best for all involved, and back down and follow someone else’s lead when it is clear that it is correct to do so. This is what the [Mishna](orallaw.html) means when it says:

***Pirke Avot 2:5*** *In a place where there are no men, try to be a man.*

This is why *Yesod* is called “Foundation,” a concept associated with the Tzaddikim, the righteous / generous individual. Such people are the foundation of [creation](bara.html), for [HaShem](hashem.html) created and maintains the [world](worlds.html) for such people:

***Mishle (Proverbs) 10:25*** *The Tzaddik is the foundation of the* [*world*](worlds.html)*…*

Furthermore, they [know](daat.html) how to correctly relate to all those around them, in any given situation. It is a Yesod-[type](types.html) personality that allows [one](one.html) to throw his entire being into a relationship, and the necessary self-control and reliability upon which relationships are built.

This is why [Yosef](joseph.html) was tested with the wife of his master Potiphar, and why he was able to pass the test as well. And, because Yesod is relationship oriented, it also represents the transition between the sefirot above it, and the sefira of Malchut below it, just as [Yosef](joseph.html) was the transition between the forefathers ([Avraham](avraham.html), [Yitzchak](isaac.html), and [Yaaqob](israelja.html)) before him, and the [nation](nations.html) that was to be formed after his death.

[One](one.html) final, important point with respect to this sefira. In Kabbalah, Yesod is divided into [two](two.html) parts: Yesod proper, and Ateret HaYesod, the “Crown of Yesod.” According to the Kabbalists, as long as the Yesod proper governs history, the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people will remain in [exile](galuyot.html). However, the moment history reaches the part referred to as *“*Ateret HaYesod*”*, a specific and set [time](time.html), [exile](galuyot.html) ends and the period of [Mashiach](mashiach.html) begins. This is the [time](time.html) [known](daat.html) as “b’itah”, the final [time](time.html) for [Mashiach](mashiach.html)’s arrival.

There is a contradiction found in the term describing the period in which we now find ourselves: “Ikvata d’mashicha”, “the heels of [Mashiach](mashiach.html)”. On the [one](one.html) [hand](fourteen.html), “heel” denotes a lowly level, for the heel is the least perceptive limb. Like the insensitive heel, this era is characterized by an inability to perceive G-dliness in the [world](worlds.html).

On the other [hand](fourteen.html), “eikev” also denotes [Mashiach](mashiach.html)’s footsteps, and that they can already be heard approaching. This second meaning suggests the most exalted [spiritual](physical.html) level, when [Mashiach](mashiach.html)’s influence in the [world](worlds.html) can be felt and [one](one.html) can sense the impending [redemption](redemption.html).

The same principle holds true on the larger scale as well. It is precisely because the period right before [Mashiach](mashiach.html)’s arrival is so dark that we are able to hear his footsteps [coming](coming.html) closer; furthermore, the self-[sacrifice](korbanot.html) we must have nowadays in order to live as [Jews](gen-jew.html) is the vessel to contain the greatest revelation of divine light which will occur with the [coming](coming.html) [redemption](redemption.html).

At present we are experiencing the climax of this dichotomy, for although all [signs](signs.html) clearly indicate that “Behold, [Mashiach](mashiach.html) is [coming](coming.html),” the full [redemption](redemption.html) has not yet occurred. We therefore implore the Almighty with the [cry](mashal.html) of “Till when?”, which will prompt Him to end all contradictions forever with the establishment of the Messianic Era.

We are living now in the [time](time.html) of *footsteps of the* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*.* Our Sages [teach](teacher.html) us that this will be a [time](time.html) of immense confusion, when it will appear that [events](feasts.html) have gone haywire, and it will seem that [HaShem](hashem.html) does not, or cannot, run the [world](worlds.html). The entire reason for this total hiding of providential guidance is to test our faithfulness to [HaShem](hashem.html); that even when tragic [events](feasts.html) do occur, we do not forget, even for a second, question, Who is running the [world](worlds.html). We live in the final chapter of [world](worlds.html) history. The gods of materialism and self-centeredness never close their [eyes](body.html), relentless in their media barrage.

These [signs](signs.html) herald an end to the darkness which is symptomatic of the period of [exile](galuyot.html). In anticipation of the obliteration of evil, there is a last-minute surge in some negative ways, particularly insolence and arrogance. Although these negative traits existed before, they were never as prevalent as they are today.

# The [Time](time.html) Immediately Before [Mashiach](mashiach.html)

by Rabbi [Jacob](israelja.html) Immanuel Schochet

The [time](time.html) [appointed](settimes.html) by G-d for the Messianic [redemption](redemption.html) is a closely guarded [secret](sod.html).[[14]](#footnote-14) Nonetheless, we are offered many hints to recognize its proximity: when certain conditions come about, await the imminent [coming](coming.html) of [Mashiach](mashiach.html).

Most of these conditions are quite disturbing, clearly displaying a situation of the very “bottom of the pit”.[[15]](#footnote-15) [One](one.html) major source describes the [world](worlds.html) condition in those days as follows: increase in insolence and impudence; oppressing inflation; unbridled irresponsibility on the part of authorities; centers of learning will turn into bawdy houses; wars; many destitutes begging, with none to pity them; wisdom shall be putrid; the pious shall be despised; truth will be abandoned; the young will insult the old; family-breakup with mutual recriminations; impudent leadership.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Other sources add: lack of scholars; succession of troubles and evil decrees; [famines](famine.html); mutual denunciations; epidemics of terrible diseases; poverty and scarcity; cursing and blaspheming; international confrontations, [nations](nations.html) provoking and fighting each other.[[17]](#footnote-17) In short, it will be a [time](time.html) of suffering that will make it look as if G‑d were [asleep](mashal.html). These are [birth](birth.html) pangs of [Mashiach](mashiach.html), bearable only in anticipation of the bliss that follows them.

“When you see a [generation](toldot.html) ever dwindling, hope for him .. when you see a [generation](toldot.html) overwhelmed by many troubles as by a river, await him.”[[18]](#footnote-18) “When you see [nations](nations.html) fighting each other, look toward the feet of [Mashiach](mashiach.html).”[[19]](#footnote-19)

Little wonder that some sages expressed apprehensions about those days in terms of, “Let [[Mashiach](mashiach.html)] come, but let me not see him.”[[20]](#footnote-20) The prevailing attitude, however, is to await his [coming](coming.html) in spite of all, even if thereafter we shall [merit](merit.html) no more than [sitting](mashal.html) “in the shadow of his [donkey](chamor.html)’s dung”![[21]](#footnote-21)

The troubles and agony of Chevlei[Mashiach](mashiach.html), [birth](birth.html) pangs of [Mashiach](mashiach.html), however, are not unavoidable: “What is man to do to be spared the pangs of [Mashiach](mashiach.html)? Let him engage in Torah and acts of loving-kindness!”[[22]](#footnote-22)

Moreover, there are also good and happy [signs](signs.html) indicating the imminent [coming](coming.html) of [Mashiach](mashiach.html): a good measure of prosperity;[[23]](#footnote-23) a renewal of Torah [study](study.html);[[24]](#footnote-24) and opening of the “gates of wisdom above and the wellsprings of wisdom below”,[[25]](#footnote-25) evidenced also by scientific and technological discoveries and advances; a manifestation and propagation of the mystical teachings of the Torah;[[26]](#footnote-26) and also, “In the [time](time.html) that [Mashiach](mashiach.html) will awaken, many [signs](signs.html) and miracles will occur in the [world](worlds.html)”.[[27]](#footnote-27)

# In The Galil

“In the [time](time.html) of the [resurrection](techiyat.html) of the dead, many camps will arise in Land of the Galil, because that is where the [Mashiach](mashiach.html) is going to be [first](one.html) revealed, since

[*Zohar*](orallaw.html)*, Vayakhel 220a … it is part of* [*Joseph*](joseph.html)*’s territory.* *It will be the* [*first*](one.html) *place to be destroyed. It will begin there* *ahead of all other places, and then spread to the* [*nations*](nations.html)*”*.

[Shechem](city.html) (Nablus), according to the [Talmud](orallaw.html), is where bad things happen[[28]](#footnote-28). It is a place “set aside for punishment.” Interestingly, the [Talmud](orallaw.html) says that when falsehood rules the minds of men, this is actually [one](one.html) of the [SIGNS](signs.html) that the [Mashiach](mashiach.html) is not too far away.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Why it is precisely our [generation](toldot.html) that should [merit](merit.html) the [coming](coming.html) of [Mashiach](mashiach.html)? Because it is precisely *our* service of [HaShem](hashem.html), the very end in the process of preparing the [world](worlds.html), that will complete the necessary steps to bring about the Messianic [redemption](redemption.html).

Ikvata d’mashicha suggests the last [generation](toldot.html) of the [galut](galuyot.html) ([exile](galuyot.html)), thus the last stage of history of the pre-Messianic era. That [generation](toldot.html) is last not only in terms of [time](time.html), but also in terms of stature-[spiritually](physical.html) and morally the lowest and hindmost, analogous to the heel of man. On the other [hand](fourteen.html), being the last [generation](toldot.html) of the [galut](galuyot.html), it is also the [one](one.html) that feels and hears the footsteps of [Mashiach](mashiach.html) and will [experience](experience.html) his [coming](coming.html).

In this heel [generation](toldot.html) we are susceptible to being bitten by the serpent. We are the [generation](toldot.html) that is most at risk from the serpent.

There is a danger of “you shall bruise the heel.” In the final [generations](toldot.html) of the [exile](galuyot.html) the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [nation](nations.html) resembles [Adam](adam.html) HaRishon, and the culmination of the [exile](galuyot.html) is his heel. The danger exists that the serpent will bite [Adam](adam.html)’s heel.

***Bava Batra 58a*** *Rabbi Banaah was measuring tombs ... [and] came to the tomb of* [*Adam*](adam.html)*. Said Rabbi Banaah: I looked at his* [*two*](two.html) *heels, and they shone like suns.*

This last [generation](toldot.html) has the task and purpose to draw the Divine Presence all the way down to the very earthiness of this material [world](worlds.html), which will happen with the [coming](coming.html) of [Mashiach](mashiach.html) and the ultimate [redemption](redemption.html).

Once the “feet” [generation](toldot.html) is reached, then [Mashiach](mashiach.html) will come, as it says in the [Zohar](orallaw.html).[[30]](#footnote-30)

In the [Midrash](orallaw.html) we have a similar idea with a bit of elaboration:

**Pesiqta deRab Kahana, Midrashic sermons for** [**Shabbat**](sabbath.html) **HaChodesh V:IX** And Rabbis say, In the septennate in which the son of David comes, in the [first](one.html) of the [seven](seven.html) year spell, *I shall cause it to rain on* [*one*](one.html) *town and not on another*.[[31]](#footnote-31) In the second, the arrows of [famine](famine.html) will be sent forth. In the [third](three.html) there will be a great [famine](famine.html), and men, women, and children will die in it, and the Torah will be forgotten in Israel. In the [fourth](four.html), there will be a [famine](famine.html) which is not really a [famine](famine.html), and plenty which is not plentiful. In the [fifth](five.html) year, there will be great plenty, and people will [eat](eating.html) and drink and rejoice, and the Torah will again be renewed. In the [sixth](six.html) there will be great thunders. In the [seventh](seven.html) there will be wars. And at the end of the [seventh](seven.html) year of that septenate, the son of David will come. Said R. Abbaye, How many septenates have there been like this [one](one.html), and yet he has not come! But matters accord with what R. Yohanan said, In the [generation](toldot.html) in which the son of David comes, disciples of sages will perish, and those that remain will have faint vision, with suffering and sighing, and terrible troubles will come on the people, and harsh decrees will be renewed. Before the [first](one.html) such decree is carried out, another will be brought along and joined to it. Said R. Abun, In the [generation](toldot.html) in which the son of David comes, the [meeting place](settimes.html) will be turned over to prostitution, the Galilee will be destroyed, Gablan will be desolate, and the Galileans will make the rounds from town to town and find no comfort. Truthful men will be [gathered](gather.html) up, and the truth will be fenced in and go its way. Where will it go? A member of the [household](househld.html) of R. Yannai said, It will go and [dwell](dwelling.html) in small flocks in the wilderness, in line with this verse of Scripture: *Truth will be among bands*.[[32]](#footnote-32) Said R. Nehorai, In the [generation](toldot.html) in which the son of David comes, youths will humiliate old men, sages will rise before youths, a slave girl will abuse her mistress, a daughter-in-[law](law.html) her mother-in-[law](law.html), a man’s enemies will be his own householders, a son will not be ashamed for his father, the wisdom of scribes will turn rotten, the vine will give its fruit but wine will be expensive. Said R. Abba bar Kahana, The son of David will come only to a [generation](toldot.html) which is liable for total extermination. Said R. Yannai, The son of David will come only to a [generation](toldot.html) the principal leaders of which are like dogs. Said R. Levi, If you see [one](one.html) [generation](toldot.html) after another blaspheming, look for the footsteps of the [messiah](mashiach.html)-king. What verse of Scripture indicates it? *Remember Lord the taunts hurled at your servant, how I have borne in my* [*heart*](body.html) *the calumnies of the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html)*; so have your enemies taunted us, 0 Lord, taunted the successors of your anointed king*.[[33]](#footnote-33) What follows? *Blessed is the Lord forever, amen, amen*.[[34]](#footnote-34)

# The [Body](body.html) as a Metaphor

The human [body](body.html) is used as a metaphor[[35]](#footnote-35) to describe the collective of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people as it has existed over the ages. In that context, our present [generation](toldot.html) can be compared to the heels, for we lack the intellectual and emotional sophistication of our forebears.

Our wills are channels for the expression of our souls, and of all the limbs in the [body](body.html), it is the heel which displays the most active obedience to this potential. Our minds and our hearts are mediums for the expression of our conscious potentials. And our heels are mediums for the expression of our inner will which transcends our conscious thought. Similarly, in the analogue, it is the souls which can be compared to “heels”, the people living in Ikvata d’mashicha, whose commitment expresses the inner power of the soul and manifests the infinite potential of the G-dly spark that exists within each of us.

our present [generation](toldot.html) can be compared to the heel the least sensitive limb in the [body](body.html) for we lack the intellectual and emotional sophistication of our forebears. Indeed, our Sages[[36]](#footnote-36) refer to the heel as "the [Angel](angels.html) of Death within man." Nevertheless, we find that the heel possesses an advantage over the other limbs. It is the part of the [body](body.html) that yields most easily to the will. For example, it is easier to put [one](one.html)'s heel into very hot or very cold water than to immerse any other limb. [One](one.html) might say that this advantage is a result of the heel's lack of sensitivity. Because the heel is furthest removed from the influence of the [heart](body.html) and mind, it offers less resistance to orders which run contrary to [one](one.html)'s thoughts and feelings.

Chassidut[[37]](#footnote-37) explains, however, that there is a deeper dimension to the heel's responsiveness. The heel is uniquely structured to express the power of the will. Our wills are channels for the expression of our souls, and of all the limbs in the [body](body.html), it is the heel which displays the most active obedience to this potential.

# [End of Days](lastdays.html)

The concept of the "[end of days](lastdays.html)" includes the period immediately preceding the [redemption](redemption.html) and the [redemption](redemption.html) itself, while the "footsteps of the [Messiah](mashiach.html)" or the "birth pangs of the [Messiah](mashiach.html)" refers only to the final period of subjugation.[[38]](#footnote-38)

The Chafetz Chaim [taught](teacher.html) further: The changes that take place in the [world](worlds.html) today within a short [time](time.html), used to take hundreds of years. We see that the wheel of [time](time.html) is spinning at lightning speed. "What has God done to us?";[[39]](#footnote-39) why are conditions changing in this way? Concerning these questions, the Chafetz Chaim [taught](teacher.html): Since the [time](time.html) of [Creation](bara.html) and until today, endless accounts have piled up. Before the [Messiah](mashiach.html) comes, these accounts must be settled, because the [redemption](redemption.html) will remove the evil inclination, and thus all matters of this [world](worlds.html) that pertain to the battle waged against the evil inclination will be cancelled. Therefore, every person must settle whatever debt he still owes God. Since the [time](time.html) of the [Messiah](mashiach.html) is very close, it is imperative that this process be speeded up. From the day that the Chafetz Chaim, *z"l*, expressed this view, the pace of [events](feasts.html) in the [world](worlds.html) has grown even faster. Overnight, literally, things have happened that previously would have taken many [generations](toldot.html)… It is as though the wheel of [time](time.html) is accelerating under pressure from an external [command](cmds613.html): "Hurry up!" Anyone with intelligence can understand that we are living in a special period, which is destined to change the entire [world](worlds.html) order; day by day, the pace grows faster…

# Faster and Faster

I am sixty+ years old. In my lifetime I have observed that things are speeding up. Cars, airplanes, technology, disasters – are all speeding up. Cars are faster, planes are faster, technology advances are happening more rapidly, and disasters around the [world](worlds.html) seem to be happening more often.

This rapid increase suggests that the end is less than a lifetime away. We must soon reach a [time](time.html) when [one](one.html) could [travel](mashal.html) from America to Japan in the blink of an eye, for example. Any speed increase after that would not be noticeable. The computers, in my lifetime, have gone from room-sized, to refrigerator size, to desktop sized, to laptop sized, to tablet sized, to iPhone size. All that in just sixty years. A computer cannot get much smaller and still be observed with the naked eye. We will soon reach a limit.

Never before have we seen such rapid change. If things continue to change this rapidly, then the limit should be reached within a lifetime. Can the footsteps of [Mashiach](mashiach.html) be far behind?

***Kol haTor 2:103. [Tehillim (Psalms) 89:52]*** *the footsteps of your Mashiach -- In the verse “who taunted the footsteps of your Mashiach.” Wherever footsteps of mashiach are mentioned, they refer to the mission of the first Mashiach, Mashiach ben Yosef. As is known, the enemies of God and the enemies of Israel cause trouble to the entire process of the beginning of the Redemption that occurs in the footsteps of the Mashiach. In the Psalm, it states regarding this matter: “who taunted the footsteps of your Mashiach”.[[40]](#footnote-40) Our Sages have already enumerated all the tribulations that come during the footsteps of the Mashiach. We have no one to lean on except our Father in Heaven and His will that we occupy ourselves with the awakening from below, and stand firmly against all disturbances and taunts. We must act in the spirit of Eitan HaEzrachi, who is our forefather Abraham, and according to a parable of the Gaon (as explained in Chapter 1), the first Mashiach ben Yosef. The Gaon added the hint in the verse: “How will I know that I will inherit it .” The word ‘’ in gematria equals [566].*

**\* \* \***

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1. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 40:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Tickling* is the act of touching a part of the body so as to cause involuntary twitching movements and/or laughter. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Avot d'Rabbi Nosson, the conclusion of ch. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bereshit (Genesis) 25:25-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Also known as Olam Asiyah, עולם עשיה in Hebrew, literally the *World of Action.* the last of the four spiritual worlds of the Kabbalah—Atziluth, Beriah, Yetzirah, 'Asiyah—based on the passage in Isaiah 43:7. According to the *Maseket Atziluth,* it is the region where the Ophanim rule and where they promote the hearing of prayers, support human endeavor, and combat evil. According to the system of the later Land of Israel Kabbalah, ‘Asiyah’ is the lowest of the spiritual worlds containing the Ten Heavens and the whole system of mundane Creation. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bereshit (Genesis) 32:28. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This idea comes from: ***Tehillim (Psalms) 89:52*** *Wherewith Thine enemies have taunted, HaShem, wherewith they have taunted the footsteps of Thine anointed.* This refers to the period leading up to the final Redemption and arrival of Mashiach ben David. During this period, the mission of Mashiach ben Yosef is most strongly manifest in setting the stage for the complete Redemption through Mashiach ben David. The above verse describes the “enemies of Hashem” who work to undermine and destroy all efforts of Mashiach ben Yosef and the Jewish people in furthering the Redemption process. Through this they “taunt the footsteps of Mashiach”, and delay the Redemption. These obstacles and hindrances to the Redemption are described at length by Chazal in Sanhedrin 98. In the end, it is upon the Jewish people to fortify themselves during this difficult period of Jewish history and continue moving forward and be active in achieving all the appropriate rectifications and goals associated with the mission of Mashiach ben Yosef, in bringing about the final Redemption. (Vilna Gaon) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Sefer Pirke Teshuva V'Geula [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Tehillim (Psalms) 126:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Sotah 9:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “The heels (footsteps of Mashiach)”. The term used in describing the final period of Jewish history: **"עקבות"**, “the heels” or “footsteps” of Mashiach is, used to imply two things: (1) Just as **"עקבות"** implies consecutive footsteps, one after the other, so too, the Redemption process, which occurs through human effort and input, moves slowly, bit by bit, stage by stage, building up finally to the coming of Mashiach ben David. (2) The word: **"עקבות"** is rooted to the word **"עקב"**, meaning “bent” or “crooked”. It also denotes “trickery” or to “circumvent”. This is because, during this period, because of the great physical and spiritual opposition in the world to the Redemption of the Jewish people, all of Mashiach ben Yosef’s efforts must be hidden and secretive; in order to avoid the opposition of the Satan, in all his manifestations. Through acting secretly, behind the scenes, Mashiach ben Yosef is thus able to circumvent the judgment and opposition to the Redemption process, and successfully achieve the goals of his mission. (Vilna Gaon). Kol haTor 2:103 teaches that the “Footsteps of Mashiach” always refers to Mashiach ben Yosef, the first redeemer. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Shmuel bet (II Samuel) 22:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Sanhedrin 97a [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Pesachim 54b; Midrash Tehillim 9:2. See [Zohar Chadash](file:///D:\Word\Body\orallaw.html), Bereshit, 8a. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Midrash Tehillim 45:3. See Ma’amarei Admur Hazaken-Ethalech, p. 103f.; and Besha’ah Shehik-dimu-5672, vol. I:p. 551; relating this to the principle ([Midrash](file:///D:\Word\Body\orallaw.html) Tehillim 22:4; Zohar II:46a) that the darkest moments of the night are immediately before daybreak. Cf. Zohar I:170a. For this analogy see also the comment of R. Elijah, the Vilna Gaon, cited in Even Shelemah, ch. 11:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Sotah 49b [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Sanhedrin 97a; Shir Rabba 2:29. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Sanhedrin 98a [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Bereshit Rabba 42:4. Note Pesiqta Rabbati 37:2 (ed. Friedmann, ch. 36)! [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Sanhedrin 98b [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid. See also Zohar II:7aff. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Sanhedrin 98b [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Sanhedrin 97a; Shir Rabba 2:29. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Zohar I:117a [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Zohar I:118a. See Zohar Chadash, Tikkunim, 96c; and Mayanei Hayeshu’ah, I:2. Cf. below, note 84. Note also Igeret Teyman, ch. 3, that prophecy shall be restored to Israel prior to the coming of Mashiach. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Zohar II:8a [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Sotah 11a [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Sanhedrin 97a [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Parashat Pekudei258; end of Parashat Vayakhel [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Amos 4:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 59:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Tehillim (Psalms) 89:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Tehillim (Psalms) 89:52 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Tanya, ch. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Avot d'Rabbi Nosson, the conclusion of ch. 31 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Torah Or 1b, Sefer HaMamaarim 5685, p. 262ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Kovetz Ma'amarei Ikveta de-Meshicha* (Jerusalem, 5762), pp. 291-328. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Yirmiyahu 5:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Tehillim (Psalms) 89:52 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)