Q4a. Why do Jews need redemption if they have the Law to redeem themselves?

To be *redeemed* by the Lord God is the one distinction between the people of God’s possession and those who are strangers, for the Lord *redeems* His people to make them **his own**. For, he says: “He who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine” (Is. 43:1). This is the reason the Lord chose Israel as his own and not mighty Babylon. Israel in its weakness has always needed redemption. Babylon needed neither the Lord nor His redemption, relying on its own riches, power, and ability for self-redemption.

From its very “creation” and “formation,” then, the fathers of Israel have always found themselves in impossible conditions from which they looked to the Lord God alone for redemption. From the very beginning, the *avot* had a *redemptive faith* in the Lord God and His promised Seed. And, Israel and its people were meant to have this same redemptive faith in the Lord and His anointed Redeemer, His promised *zera.* For, the same *impossible* conditions which drove the *avot* to the Lord God for redemption were the same which confront Israel.

Yet, Israel and its people oddly believe in a Self-redemption. Like a scaled down Babylon, they rely on their own wisdom (Jewish teachers and learning), power (ability to perform mitzvot), and riches (of Jewish identity and culture) to achieve a Self-righteousness. However, this is the Lord God’s assessment of Israel’s self-righteousness, as Isaiah the prophet speaks on behalf of the people: “We all have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment” (Is. 64:6a). And, the Lord spoke to the prophet Jeremiah of Israel’s persistent unbelief, saying: “5 From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. 26 Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers” (Jeremiah 7:25-26). Thus, the Lord God gives no indication that Israel has attained a Self-Righteousness that please God from exodus to exile. For, exile to Israel’s current return to the land, there is *still* no indications that the conditions and **need for redemption** have been reversed based on Israel’s self-righteousness. Rather, Ezekiel’s prophetic words indicate that Israel’s condition of being spiritually lifeless, a condition which all humanity inherited from Adam, is still the underlying reason for its failed Self-righteousness and need for redemption: “Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’” (Ezekiel 37:11). Rather, only the spiritual redemption of the Lord gives a spiritual life: “And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. 14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord” (Ezek. 37:13-14).

Thus, Israel’s entire history as a people evidences their need for the Lord God’s redemption and the failure of their own **Self-redemption**, especially a **Self-righteousness** based on observing *Torah* and following its *mitzvot.* Why? Though Israel had the Law, its people still inherited Adam’s “naked” and spiritually dead flesh which in darkness recoils from God, which we even see at Sina. For, when they encountered God’s presence, “the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die” (Exodus 20:18b-19). This is the same reaction which Adam and Eve exhibited because they were “naked”—their spiritual life had died when they sought to “be like God,” to replace the Lordship of God with their own Self-Rule (Gen. 3:7-8). But, this desire for Self-Rule caused them to “die” spiritually, as the Lord God had warned (Gen. 2:17), making them “naked” (3:7)—in **spiritually dead flesh uncovered of life**.

Thus, people in such a hopeless condition are exactly the people who need the Lord and his redemption. They are not people who need assistance so that they can redeem themselves. So, the Lord God doesn’t furnish Israel with swords to liberate themselves from Pharoah. God’s story of redemption glories not in the heroic and capable works of his people to redeem themselves but on the surrendered obedience to rely on the Almighty One to save.

Consider, then, that the *redemptive faith* of the *avot* was entirely reliant on the Lord God and His promised Zera, that is, His Mashiach. Only the Lord God’s Mashiach redeems Israel from the impossible conditions which it is helpless to reverse.