

# Big Questions in Jewish Spirituality

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UNIT 8



## UNIT 8

# What is *Mashiach*?

## Unit Objectives

### Students will be able to:

- Explain that *Mashiach* is a cornerstone of Jewish thought.
- Share understandings of *Mashiach*.
- Reflect on various approaches to *Mashiach*, including the idea that redemption is in their own hands.
- Synthesize their own personal view of *Mashiach*.

## NOTES:

- This unit is crafted to delve into the intricate Jewish concept of *Mashiach*, offering students a comprehensive understanding of its varied interpretations across personal, communal, and global spheres. The goal is to inspire students to engage with the concept of *Mashiach* from multiple perspectives, emphasizing the theme of striving towards a better world, thereby imbuing student lives with a sense of purpose.
- Teachers are encouraged to use this unit as a tool to broaden students' understanding of *Mashiach* beyond the familiar notion of a redeemer. In fact, the mystical concept of *Mashiach* can serve as a powerful catalyst for spiritual growth and transformation within individuals and communities alike. This is because the approach emphasizes individual agency, rather than simply promoting passively waiting for redemption at hands of the *Mashiach* or his messenger. By refining ourselves, our relationships with others, and our relationships with God, we present *Mashiach* not only as a figure of future redemption but also as a present-day force for personal and communal change, enriching students' spiritual journeys and perspectives.

## Introductory Essay

*This essay, for the teacher, is meant to provide some context and walk the teacher through the main ideas in this unit.*

The belief in *Mashiach* is a cornerstone of Jewish thought. The idea appears in the Jewish corpus, is central to Jewish prayer, and is even the subject of popular Jewish songs. Throughout Jewish history, the hope for a messianic era has been a source of comfort and aspiration and occasionally, disaster. The concept itself is complex and multifaceted.

The *Mashiach* as described in Biblical sources, is a human leader, a descendant of King David (literally the anointed one), who will usher in a new era. *Neviim* such as Zecharia, Yechezkel, and others foretell the coming of a redeemer (*goel*) and provide varied visions and interpretations, but generally include some or all of the following: a time of peace, minimally for Israel and the Jews, but some global peace as well, gathering of all Jews back to the Land of Israel, rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and a renewed sense of Divine presence in the physical world. Many visions also include *techiyat hametim*, resurrection of the dead, who will also return to Israel. In this way, *Mashiach* has also become a symbolic representation of an era rather than just a person.

Building off of the visions in the Biblical sources, the authors of the Talmud refer to *Mashiach* both as the human redeemer (descendant of David) and as a redemptive, messianic era. This era is characterized as an era of peace, justice, spiritual development, and Divine understanding. While the Talmudic scholars do not discuss a specific timeline for the coming of the *Mashiach*, a central feature of Talmudic discussions revolves around the need for character refinement and moral development in anticipation of the arrival of *Mashiach*, or to hasten the arrival of the *Mashiach*.

In addition to the idea of *Mashiach* as a specific person who will lead and redeem the Jewish people from their exile, the Jewish mystical tradition offers another, deeper dimension. Kabbalistic and Chassidic texts often speak of *Mashiach* as symbolizing a collective spiritual awakening. This perspective sees *Mashiach* not only as a singular savior, but as a force activated within each individual through acts of love, kindness, and adherence to mitzvot. Every person has a role to play, even the most selfish person. By harnessing qualities that we may think of as negative—say, an inability to compromise—that selfish person may turn into a force of good by uncompromisingly fighting for the rights of the disadvantaged. In other words, a person who is deemed the lowest can be converted to the highest by his actions—his selfish desires have been rerouted toward serving God.

As we ascend the levels, we become more refined, purer, achieving a closer and closer connection to the Divine. In this view, *Mashiach* is linked to the concept of *Koma Shelema* (Complete Edifice), suggesting levels of spiritual revelation and the collective effort to ascend these levels. *Mashiach* is the culmination and refinement of the greatest desire, but converted to help the world.

Another facet of this approach is that the seeds of the *Mashiach* were sown from the beginning of time, from creation, in Adam himself. These were passed on through

King David, whose descendent will be revealed to be the Maschiach.<sup>1</sup> In other words, redemption is a continuous and destined process, and one in which humanity builds toward *Mashiach* in each generation.

This understanding of *Mashiach* is not only about awaiting a future savior; it is also about recognizing our role in creating a world that reflects the values and ideals associated with the Messianic era. This involves a commitment to justice, kindness, and the continual pursuit of spiritual and moral growth.

## Key Ideas

*These are the key ideas of the unit. This list can be used to ensure that all the key ideas are covered over the course of the lessons.*

- *Mashiach* is central to Jewish belief. It appears explicitly in daily prayers, is one of the Rambam's principles of faith, etc.
- *Mashiach* is thought of as all of the following in Jewish thought: a specific person/ redeemer, a time period, a concept, a universal process. Traditionally, *Mashiach* is seen as the redeemer or the herald of the period of redemption.
- Each of the above conceptions of *Mashiach* can encourage active efforts towards improving our world.
- The concept of *Mashiach* (and redemption) is intertwined with ideas of justice, redemption, and universal peace. This is true on a universal level, but has implications for individuals, as each individual has a role to play in preparing for this period.
- Many of our traditional prayers and blessings offer hope for a Messianic vision. While the specific visions differ, the overarching theme is one of hope for a perfected world.

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1. Through *gilgul nefashot*—the same soul is passed through by Adam to *Mashiach*. *Gilgul nefashot* is explored in the "What Happens After Death" unit.

- Kabbala views Mashiach as both a personified redemptive figure, as well as collective experience and revelation in which every person has a role. We should not “wait for” Mashiach, but actively work to make it happen by serving God.
- Each person has a vital role in making *Mashiach* come.
- The seeds for *Mashiach* were sown during creation through Adam. We actively build towards *Mashiach* in each generation.

## Important Terms

*These are terms that may come up in classroom discussions. It is important to have definitions on hand and to make sure that the teacher and students are talking about the same thing.*

- **Geula (Redemption)** – The process or state of being redeemed, in this context, the world’s transformation into a state of peace and Divine awareness.
- **Koma Shelema (Complete Edifice)** – The Kabbalistic concept of ascending spiritual levels towards ultimate enlightenment and unity in the messianic era. *Koma Shelema* metaphorically represents the process of achieving spiritual completion or wholeness by ascending through various spiritual levels or stages, much like climbing a mountain. In the context of *Mashiach* and Jewish eschatology, *Koma Shelema* suggests that the revelation of the messianic era occurs in stages, each level offering a deeper understanding and closer connection to the Divine. It emphasizes the progressive nature of spiritual growth and the collective journey towards an ultimate state of unity and fulfillment in the world. This concept challenges individuals to engage in continual self-improvement and communal betterment, contributing to the realization of a more perfected world envisioned in the messianic era.
- **Mashiach** – Literally, the anointed one, a future Jewish king from the Davidic line, prophesied to bring an era of peace and harmony.

- **Olam HaBa (The World to Come)** – A term used in Jewish eschatology referring to the ultimate state of existence.
- **Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World)** – The responsibility to improve and fix the world, aligning it with Divine will.

## Classroom Activities

*In order to get the most out of this unit, and to help students understand the key ideas, we suggest that teachers complete the classroom activities (unless otherwise indicated) in the order that they appear.*

### **Trigger and Introduction – Word Association**

Go around the room and ask students to share a word/term that comes to mind when you say “*Mashiach*.” There are no right and wrong answers. The idea here is to demonstrate that at least some associations are frivolous and incorrect. Students have likely encountered Christian ideas of redemption in pop culture, or popular Jewish songs and slogans like “We want *Mashiach* NOW!” or “*Na Nach Nachma Nachman Me’uman*.” These slogans and popular ideas have denigrated the seriousness of this foundational idea. Explain that in this unit, students will be invited to explore the idea of *Mashiach* in depth and come to a more meaningful and substantive understanding of *Mashiach*.

### **Activity – Recognizing and Understanding Jewish Visions of *Mashiach***

Explain that you are now zooming in, only thinking about Jewish understandings of *Mashiach*. Organize a *chevrutah* or a chalk talk<sup>2</sup> in which the students list all of the different visions that they have encountered of *Mashiach* or messianic times in Jewish life. Examples can be: coming of Elijah, restoration of the Davidic line, rebuilding of the

2. A chalk talk is an activity in which the “chalk talks” but students are silent. In a limited time period (~5 minutes), students come up to the whiteboard to share their thoughts/do an activity.

temple, restoration of sacrifice, resurrection of the dead, world peace etc.

Once students have finished, review the different visions, filling in any holes, and work with the students to determine where the various ideas originated—*brachot*, *tefillot*, rituals, holidays, etc. By the end of this activity, the students should be familiar with the range of visions and where they are encountered in the students' daily lives.

## Question Generation

Now that students have an understanding of the range of visions of *Mashiach*, encourage students to generate questions about the nature of the messianic era, the role of *Mashiach*, and what it means for them personally and for the Jewish people. You may wish to keep a list of these on the board.

Some questions may include:

- What will happen when *Mashiach* comes? Will there be world peace, will there be resurrection of the dead?
- Once *Mashiach* comes, what is next?
- What happens to the Jewish people once *Mashiach* comes?

By this point, your students will be deep into the subject. Explain that there are many Jewish visions of *Mashiach* and today you are going to explore one that they may not have encountered before.

## Introducing the Mystical Approach, Humanity's Role in *Mashiach* – Classroom Discussion

Using the essay and key ideas sections as guidance, explain that the idea of *Mashiach* is rooted to the beginning of time, with each generation getting closer. Take students through the idea of *Koma Shelema*, explaining how we are all meant to keep on climbing and improving. The metaphor of mountain climbing is helpful in thinking about *Koma Shelema*. When you climb a mountain, the top of the mountain looks far away. You may at some point even think you have reached your goal, only to get there and learn that you have not reached the highest peak, but that there is more to go beyond what you had seen from below. This is true not only for climbing, but also character development—as you improve, there is always more to go.



This notion of *Mashiach* leads to a very concrete imperative—each person, each member of your class—has a role in engaging in a spiritual journey, behaving with acts of loving kindness and adhering to the *mitzvot*.

Many students will be familiar with the idea of “waiting for *Mashiach*.” Explain that waiting does not need to be passive—there are active ways to bring *Mashiach*.

Pose the question to the class: *What mitzvot can they do that can bring about Mashiach?*

Run a whip around, calling on every student, in random order, making sure that each student has a chance to share an answer. Answers can range from: refraining from *lashon hara*, visiting the sick, keeping Shabbat, etc.

## Internalizing and Personalizing Visions of *Mashiach*

*In this next activity, we will take this idea from the theoretical, deeper into your students' realities. Select one or more options from below (note - some activities are longer than others):*

- **Contemporary Examples** – Ask the students to brainstorm contemporary individuals who embody the principles of personal growth and self-redemption. Discuss with the class. Some prompts for discussion can be:
  - » How do these individuals reflect the ideas of personal growth and redemption? What exactly are they doing?
  - » Are there similarities and differences among the figures?
  - » How do these contemporary examples contribute to your understanding of the messianic concept?
  - » Has your understanding of the messianic concept stayed the same or changed?
  - » Has your understanding of your role in life changed? Why or why not?
- **Vision Board** – Using art materials (colored paper, paint, old newspapers, etc.),

students create a vision board depicting their aspirations for the world, drawing inspiration from Jewish concepts related to *Mashiach*. Students can focus on a vision for communal redemption or personal redemption or both—either as separate boards, or one that envisions both. Ask students to consider how individual, personal redemption can feed into communal visions of redemption.

- **Scenarios** – Below are a few scenarios that involve a range of issues that involve personal agency and responsibility. Students should choose one that interests them. They can then brainstorm ideas for a project that they can undertake within the context of their chosen scenario. The project should focus on the role of the individual and the role of the collective in solving the challenge (some sample questions follow). Students can work individually or in small groups, depending on the size of the class and the complexity of the case studies. Students will likely need more than one class to work on this.

»» *Environmentalism*: Plastic pollution in oceans and waterways has a negative impact on marine ecosystems, wildlife, and human health. The lake in your city is inundated with plastic and it has already begun to lead to a wildlife disaster.

»» *New students*: Due to a major flood in an adjacent neighborhood, another school in your city has closed. Your school is now hosting several dozen new students who you do not know, but their presence is causing major social tensions. They are traumatized by their experience and are not exactly being warm and friendly.

»» *Healthcare*: There are many people in your city without medical insurance. You just discovered that some doctors are being forced to make decisions about allocating limited resources among these patients—for instance, who will receive priority access to various medicines and treatments.

»» *Academic dishonesty*: There is an upsurge of plagiarism and cheating in your school. The administration has threatened that it will delete the grades of the next test/report for your entire class unless they think the situation will improve.

»» *Communal concerns*: A local organization that provides support to the

families of critically sick patients has not met their fundraising goals and is about to close.

Sample projects prompts include:

- How can individuals make a difference through day-to-day kindness, volunteer work, or activism?
- What motivates people to engage in these actions?
- How does your new understanding of *Mashiach* change your understanding about the imperative to engage in acts of kindness and social action?
- **Panel Discussion** – Help students organize a panel of speakers (other teachers in the school, parents, communal members, rabbis, etc.) to share their understandings of *Mashiach* with the class/broader school community. This can be a school-wide event with students at the helm organizing logistics, preparing marketing materials, etc. Most importantly, students should be in charge of the content. They will need to consider and finalize a list of questions that focus on the roles of the individual and the community within the messianic vision. Questions can include:
  - »» What is your personal understanding of *Mashiach* and where does that understanding come from?
  - »» Does this vision impact you on a daily/frequent basis? If so, how?
  - »» How much of a focus should individuals place on thinking about or acting towards *Mashiach*?
  - »» How do concepts such as *tikkun olam* and observation of *mitzvot* factor into the collective responsibility for bringing about redemption?
  - »» Based on your understanding of *Mashiach*, what are the most important steps for individuals to take to bring about the *geula*?
  - »» Based on your understanding of *Mashiach*, what are the important steps for the larger Jewish community to take in order to bring about the *geula*?

## Internalizing and Personalizing Visions of *Mashiach* – Next Steps

Once students have refined a personal vision for redemption, encourage them to make their visions manifest by engaging students in a social action (*tikkun olam*) project or projects that embodies their ideals of the messianic era. If time allows, this could be the realization of the theoretical outcomes discussed in the scenarios, but it can also be on a smaller scale, encouraging students to take concrete steps to refine themselves (e.g. in their personal behavior) and bring their visions closer to reality. This project should not be limited by the unit schedule and can be due after the unit closes.

## Deep Dive – Source Review

*There are a range of sources in the source sheet at the end of this unit—select the ones that will best work with your students. In some cases, we have included a summary of the source rather than a translation of the source for ease of use.*

Explain that the topic of *Mashiach* is one that Jewish scholars have always grappled with and explored. The concept of *Mashiach* first appears in Tanach, but discussions about what it means have continued until today.

This deep dive into the sources can be run in a few ways:

- a. Run a loosely structured discussion in your class about some of the questions that you gathered, only referring to the sources without studying them inside.
- b. Run a jigsaw activity with your students, first selecting the texts you want them to study. Bring the students back as a class at the end for a discussion.
- c. Teach the sources frontally. Clarify the meaning if there are any misunderstandings, and make sure the key points are covered.

The source sheet can be found on page 14, following the Spirituality Journal.

## Spirituality Journal

Close this topic by reflecting with your class about their role in reaching redemption. Ask students to choose two prompts from below and record their answers in their journals.

- How do different interpretations of *Mashiach* influence your understanding of the ideal Jewish existence?
- How do concepts like *Koma Shelema* challenge or enrich your vision for your own spiritual growth?
- How might the belief in *Mashiach* shape your Jewish identity and destiny?
- What changes might occur in the world during the messianic era and how do you feel about those changes?
- How does the concept of *Mashiach* influence your perspective on social justice and personal responsibility?
- What actions can we take individually and collectively to contribute to the coming of the era of *Mashiach*?

# Source Sheet

## *Zechariah 9:9-10*

גילי מאד בת־ציון הריעי בת ירושלים הנה מלכך יבוא לך צדיק ונושע הוא עני ורכב על־חמור ועל־עיר בן־אתנות: והכרתי־רכב מאפרים וסוס־מירושלם ונכרתה קשת מלחמה ודבר שלום לגוים ומשלו מים עד־ים ומנהר עד־אפסי־ארץ:

Rejoice greatly, Fair Zion; Raise a shout, Fair Jerusalem! Lo, your king is coming to you. He is victorious, triumphant, yet humble, riding on a donkey, on a donkey foaled by a jenny. He shall banish chariots from Ephraim and horses from Jerusalem; The warrior's bow shall be banished. He shall call on the nations to surrender, And his rule shall extend from sea to sea and from ocean to land's end.

## *Yechezkel 37:21-28*

דבר אליהם כה־אמר ה' הנה אני לקח את־בני ישראל אל מבין הגוים אשר הלכ־שם וקבצתי אתם מסביב והבאתי אותם אל־אדמתם: ועשיתי אתם לגוי אחד בארץ בהרי ישראל ומלך אחד יהיה לכם למלך ולא (יהיה) [יהודי] עוד לשני גוים ולא יחצו עוד לשתי ממלכות עוד: ולא יטמאו עוד בגלוליהם ובשקוציהם ובכל פשעיהם והושעתי אתם מכל מושבתיהם אשר חטאו בהם וטהרתי אותם והיודלי לעם וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לאלקים: ועבדי דוד מלך עליהם ורועה אחד יהיה לכם ובמשפטי ילכו וחקותי ישמרו ועשו אותם: וישבו עליה ארץ אשר נתתי לעבדי ליעקב אשר ישבו־בה אבותיכם וישבו עליה הָמָּה ובניהם ובני בניהם עד־עולם ודוד עבדי נשיא להם לעולם: וכרתי להם ברית שלום ברית עולם יהיה אותם ונתתים והרביתי אותם ונתתי את־מקדשי בתוכם לעולם: והיה משכני עליהם והייתי להם לאלקים והָמָּה יהיודלי לעם: וידעו הגוים כי אני יהוה מקדש את־ישראל אל בהיות מקדשי בתוכם לעולם:

And you shall declare to them: Thus said the Sovereign God: I am going to take the Israelite people from among the nations they have gone to, and gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. I will make them a single nation in the land, on the hills of Israel, and one king shall be king of them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into

two kingdoms. Nor shall they ever again defile themselves by their fetishes and their abhorrent things, and by their other transgressions. I will save them in all their settlements where they sinned, and I will purify them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God. My servant David shall be king over them; there shall be one shepherd for all of them. They shall follow My rules and faithfully obey My laws. Thus they shall remain in the land that I gave to My servant Jacob and in which your ancestors dwelt; they and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, with My servant David as their prince for all time. I will make a covenant of friendship with them—it shall be an everlasting covenant with them—I will establish them and multiply them, and I will place My Sanctuary among them forever. My Presence shall rest over them; I will be their God and they shall be My people. And when My Sanctuary abides among them forever, the nations shall know that I, God, do sanctify Israel.

*Yeshayahu 11:6-9*

וְגַר זֶאֵב עִם־כֶּבֶשׂ וְנֹמֵר עִם־גְּדִי יִרְבֹּץ וְעַל וּכְפִיר וּמְרִיא יִחְדָּו וְנֹמֵר קִטָּן נִהְגַּ בָּם:  
 וּפְרָה וְדֹב תִּרְעִינָה יִחְדָּו יִרְבְּצוּ יְלֵדֵיהֶן וְאַרְיֵה כְּבֹקֵר יֹאמְלִיתֶבֶן:  
 וְשִׁעִשֵׁעַ יִנְמֵק עַל־חֵר פֶּתֶן וְעַל מְאוּרֹת צַפְעוֹנִי גְמוּל יִדּוּ הַדָּה:  
 לֹא־יִרְעוּ וְלֹא־יִשְׁחִיתוּ בְּכַל־הָר קֹדְשִׁי כִּי־מִל אֵהָא הָאָרֶץ דַּעַה אֶת־יְהוָה כַּמִּים לַיָּם מְכַסִּים:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
 The leopard lie down with the kid;  
 The calf, the beast of prey, and the fatling together,  
 With a little boy to herd them.  
 The cow and the bear shall graze,  
 Their young shall lie down together;  
 And the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw.  
 A babe shall play  
 Over a viper's hole,  
 And an infant pass its hand  
 Over an adder's den.  
 In all of My sacred mount  
 Nothing evil or vile shall be done;  
 For the land shall be filled with devotion to God  
 As water covers the sea.

## Rambam *Mishneh Torah* Laws of Kings, Chapters 11 and 12

*In this source, the Rambam shares his vision (based on descriptions in the Tanach and in the Talmud) for the messianic times.*

הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ עֵתִיד לַעֲמֹד וּלְהַחְזִיר מַלְכוּת דָּוִד לְיִשְׁנָה לַמַּמְשָׁלָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה. וּבִזְמַן הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וּמִקְבָּץ נְדָחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְחֹזְרֵי כָּל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים בְּיָמָיו כְּשֶׁהָיוּ מִקְדָּם. מִקְרִיבֵי קֶרְבָּנוֹת. וְעוֹשֵׂי שְׂמִטִּין וְיִבְלֹת כָּל מִצְוֹת הָאֲמוּרָה בַּתּוֹרָה וְאֵל יַעֲלֶה עַל דַּעְתְּךָ שֶׁהַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ צָרִיךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתוֹת וּמוֹפְתִים וּמַחְדָּשׁ דְּבָרִים בְּעוֹלָם אוֹ מַחִיָּה מֵתִים וְכִיּוֹצֵא בַּדְּבָרִים אֵלּוּ [ב.]. אֵין הַדְּבָר כֵּךְ. וְאִם יַעֲמֹד מֶלֶךְ מִבֵּית דָּוִד הוֹגֵה בַּתּוֹרָה וְעוֹסֵק בַּמִּצְוֹת כְּדָוִד אָבִיו. כְּפִי תּוֹרָה שֶׁבִכְתָּב וְשֶׁבַעל פֶּה. וְיִכְף כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לִילֵךְ בָּהּ וּלְחַזֵּק בַּדָּקָה. וְלַחֵם מִלַּחְמוֹת ה'. הִרִי זֶה בַּחֲזָקָת שֶׁהוּא מְשִׁיחַ. (אִם עָשָׂה וְהֶצְלִיחַ וּבָנָה מִקְדָּשׁ בְּמִקְוֵמוֹ וְקִבֵּץ נְדָחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִרִי זֶה מְשִׁיחַ בּוֹדָאֵי. וְיִתְקַן אֶת הָעוֹלָם כִּלּוֹ לַעֲבֹד אֶת ה' בְּיַחַד שָׁנָא אָמַר כִּי אֲזַ אֶהְפֵּךְ אֶל עַמִּים שְׂפָה בְרוּרָה לִקְרֹא לְכֹל בְּשֵׁם ה' וְלַעֲבֹדוֹ שָׂכָם אַחַד): אֵל יַעֲלֶה עַל הַלֵּב שְׁבִימוֹת הַמְּשִׁיחַ יִבְטַל דְּבַר מִמְּנַהֲגוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם. אוֹ יִהְיֶה שֶׁם חֲדוּשׁ בַּמַּעֲשֵׂה בְרִאשִׁית. אֵלּא עוֹלָם כְּמִנְהַגוֹ נוֹהֵג. זֶה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בִּישְׁעֵיהָ (ישעיהו יא, ו) "וְגַר זָאב עִם כְּבֶשׂ וְנֹמֵר עִם גְּדִי יִרְבֹּץ" מִשָּׁל וְחִידָה. עֵינֵי הַדְּבָר שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹשְׁבֵי לְבַטָּח עִם רִשְׁעֵי עַכּוּ"ם הַמְּשׁוּלִּים כִּזָּאב וְנֹמֵר. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ירמיהו ה, ו) "זָאב עֲרֹבוֹת יִשְׁדָּד וְנֹמֵר שִׁקֵּד עַל עֲרִיהֵם". וְיִחְזְרוּ לְכֹל לְדַת הָאֱמֶת. וְלֹא יִגְזְלוּ וְלֹא יִשְׁחִיתוּ. אֵלּא יִאֲכְלוּ דְבַר הַמֵּתָר בְּנַחַת עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ישעיהו יא, ז) "וְאִרְיָה כְּבָקָר יִאֲכַל תְּבֵן". וְכֵן כִּיּוֹצֵא בְּאֵלּוּ הַדְּבָרִים בְּעֵינֵי הַמְּשִׁיחַ הֵם מְשָׁלִים. וּבִימֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ יוֹדַע לְכֹל לֵאמֹר זֶה דְּבַר הָיָה מִשָּׁל. וְמָה עֵינֵי רַמְזוֹ בָּהֵן:

In the future, the Messianic king will arise and renew the Davidic dynasty, restoring it to its initial sovereignty. He will build the Temple and gather the dispersed of Israel. Then, in his days, the observance of all the statutes will return to their previous state. We will offer sacrifices, observe the Sabbatical and Jubilee years according to all their particulars as described by the Torah. One should not presume that the Messianic king must work miracles and wonders, bring about new phenomena in the world, resurrect the dead, or perform other similar deeds. This is definitely not true. If a king will arise from the House of David who diligently contemplates the Torah and observes its *mitzvot* as prescribed by the Written Law and the Oral Law as David, his ancestor, will compel all of Israel to walk in (the way of the Torah) and rectify the breaches in its observance, and fight the wars of God, we may, with assurance, consider him *Mashiach*.



If he succeeds in the above, builds the Temple in its place, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is definitely the *Mashiach*. He will then improve the entire world, motivating all the nations to serve God together, as *Tzephaniah 3:9* states: 'I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one purpose.'

Do not presume that in the Messianic age any facet of the world's nature will change or there will be innovations in the work of creation. Rather, the world will continue according to its pattern. Although *Yeshayahu 11:6* states: 'The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the young goat,' these words are a metaphor and a parable. The interpretation of the prophecy is as follows: Israel will dwell securely together with the wicked gentiles who are likened to a wolf and a leopard, as in the prophecy *Yirmiyahu 5:6*: 'A wolf from the wilderness shall spoil them and a leopard will stalk their cities.' They will all return to the true faith and no longer steal or destroy. Rather, they will eat permitted food at peace with Israel as *Yeshayahu 11:7* states: 'The lion will eat straw like an ox.' Similarly, other Messianic prophecies of this nature are metaphors. In the Messianic era, everyone will realize which matters were implied by these metaphors and which allusions they contained.

#### *Masechet Pesachim 54a*

*This excerpt from the Talmud explains that the arrival of the Mashiach is a pre-planned component of this world and not simply a cure for the ills of the world.*

תְּנִיא: שְׁבַע דְּבָרִים נִבְרָאוּ קֹדָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא הָעוֹלָם, וְאֵלוּ הֵן: תּוֹרָה, וּתְשׁוּבָה, וְגַן עֵדֵן, וְגִיהֵנוֹם, וְכֶסֶף הַכְּבוֹד, וּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, וְשֵׁמוֹ שֶׁל מְשִׁיחַ.

It was taught in a *baraita*: Seven phenomena were created before the world was created, and they are: Torah, and repentance, and the Garden of Eden, and Gehenna, and the Throne of Glory, and the Temple, and the name of *Mashiach*.

### Ramchal, opening of "Maamar HaGeula"

*The Ramchal explains that Mashiach will not just be an end to the bad, but a post-facto understanding of why all of the bad and suffering was necessary, and even beneficial.*

ולגאולה נמצאו הכנות רבות ופעולות גדולות וחזקות מאד, נודעים למשכילים אשר נסו ללכת בדרכי החכמה ועמדו על אמתה. וכאשר תתפשט החכמה בעולם אז יראו וידעו הכל כמה הגדיל ה' לעשות עמנו, כי כאשר חשבו ישראל שהסתיר הב"ה את פניו מהם ועזב אותם, אז היה מכין להם טובה וברכה, כי אז היה ממלא להם אוצרות גדולים אשר לרחבם אין קץ ולגדולתם אין תכלית. ובאוצרות האלה היה נותן כל הון יקר ונעים וכל סגולת מלכים בכל עת ובכל שעה, עד שנתמלאו אלה האוצרות מה שאין הפה יכולה לדבר ואזן לשמוע ואפילו לב להרהר. וכשיגיע זמן המנוחה הגדולה העתידה להגלות בעולם, יפתחו כל האוצרות האלה ומהם יצאו כל מיני מחמדים וינתנו לישראל חלף עבודתם הקשה שעבדו בגלותם.

ועל הסוד הגדול הזה נאמר (תהלים צ, טו) "שמחנו כימות עיניתנו שנות ראינו רעה". כי כל הימים שהיו ישראל בגלות ואור לא נגה עליהם, אותו האור הראוי לאותם הימים לא אבד, אלא כל האור ההוא היה הב"ה גונזו באלה אוצרות שאמרתי לך. וכשיהיה הזמן לפתוח אותם אז יצא כל האור ההוא כאחד, ואז יהיה זמן שמחה לישראל אשר כמוה לא נהיתה, ויתוקן העולם במנוחה והשקט ולא יהיה עוד יגון בעולם כלל.

**Summary:** This passage reflects on the concept of Divine providence and redemption, suggesting that during periods of hardship, such as the Jewish exile, God was secretly preparing abundant blessings and storing vast treasures of goodness and light for the people of Israel. These treasures, filled with incomprehensible wealth and delights, are to be revealed in a future time of great rest and universal peace, bringing unparalleled joy and happiness to Israel in recognition of their faith and hard labor. This time of redemption will correct the world into a state of tranquility and cease all sorrow. The text underscores a profound faith in Divine wisdom and the eventual revelation of God's hidden blessings, illustrating a hopeful perspective that all suffering and adversity serve a higher purpose and will ultimately lead to a greater good.

## Maharal, *Netzach Yisrael* Chapter 46

ממה שהתבאר יש לך לדעת, כי ענין המשיח וההנהגה שתהיה בעולם, שיהיה העולם בשלימות, לא כמו שהיה העולם הזה, רק הויה אחרת. ובפרק השואל (שבת קנא:): "זכור בוראך בימי בחורותך עד אשר לא יבואו ימי הרעה" (ר' קהלת יב, א), אלו ימי הזקנה. "והגיעו שנים אשר תאמר אין לי חפץ בהם" (שם) אלו ימי המשיח, שאין בהם לא זכות ולא חובה, עד כאן. ופירוש ענין זה, שהדבר אשר הוא בפעל אינו יוצא עוד לפעל, אחר שכבר הוא בפעל. ולכך העולם הזה אשר אנחנו בו, אשר אינו בשלימות, וכיון שאינו בשלימות, אפשר בו החטא, שישנה האדם דרכו לחטא. אבל ימי המשיח, כבר העולם בפעל השלימות, לכך לא יהיה קנין זכות, הוא היציאה אל הפעל, ולא חטא לשנות האדם את מעשיו ממה שנברא עליו האדם, כיון שכבר הוא בשלימות הגמור, אין כאן שנוי, רק יהיה הכל כאשר הוא, כי הכל יהיה בפעל.

ויראה שאין לומר שלא יהיו ישראל קונים עוד שלימות ומעלה לימות המשיח, רק שלא יוכל הרשע לשנות מעשיו שיהיה צדיק. ודבר זה נקרא 'יציאה לפעל', אחר שהיה רשע כבר, שיהיה מעתה צדיק. ולכך הכתוב מזהיר האדם שיהיה צדיק קודם שיתגלה המשיח, שאז בודאי אפשר שהחוטא יחזור בתשובה. אבל לימות המשיח לא יוכל לעשות תשובה, כי אין שם שנוי שיסנה עצמו מרע לטוב שיהיה הרשע צדיק, או מטוב לרע. אבל אם כבר הוא צדיק, אז בודאי אפשר שיקנה שלימות ומעלה יותר. והדעת נותן כך, כי אין ימי המשיח שיהיה העולם שכלי לגמרי, ויהיו כמו מלאכים נבדלים, שהרי יהיו אוכלים ושותים, ואינו עולם המשיח כמו עולם הבא. ולפיכך בודאי שייך בו קנין מעלה, רק שלא יהיה דבר זה שיהיה האדם משנה מעשיו מן הרע אל הטוב, או מן הטוב אל הרע.

**Summary:** This text conveys the idea that in the messianic era, the world will reach a state of perfection where the concepts of sin, merit, and obligation as we understand them now will not exist. People will not change from good to evil or vice versa because everyone will be in a state of complete perfection. However, the text also suggests that righteousness and moral elevation remain relevant concepts, especially before the arrival of the *Mashiach*, indicating the importance of striving for goodness and spiritual elevation in the present world.

**Massechet Pesachim 50a**

This *gemara* explains that the difference between the current world and the World to Come (the world in the time of the *Mashiach*) is not in how God will operate but rather in how we will understand and experience God.

”וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה ה' אֶחָד וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד.” אֵטוֹ הָאֵיִדְנָא לָאוֹ אֶחָד הוּא?  
אָמַר רַבִּי אַחָא בַר חֲנִינָא: לֹא כְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, עַל בְּשׂוֹרוֹת טוֹבוֹת אוֹמְרִים: ”בְּרוּךְ הַטוֹב וְהַמְּטִיב”, וְעַל בְּשׂוֹרוֹת רָעוֹת אוֹמְרִים: ”בְּרוּךְ דִּיּוּן הָאֱמֶת”. לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, כּוֹלוּ ”הַטוֹב וְהַמְּטִיב”.  
”וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד.” מַאי ”אֶחָד”? אֵטוֹ הָאֵיִדְנָא לָאוֹ שִׁמוֹ אֶחָד הוּא? אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: לֹא כְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, נִכְתָּב בִּיּוֹד הֵי וּמְקָרָא בְּאֶלֶף דָּלֶת. אֲבָל לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא כּוֹלוּ אֶחָד, מְקָרָא בִּיּוֹד הֵי וְנִכְתָּב בִּיּוֹד הֵי.

“And the Lord shall be King over all the earth, on that day shall the Lord be one and His name one” (*Zechariah 14:9*). The Gemara asks: Is that to say that now He is not one? Rabbi Aḥa bar Ḥanina said: The World-to-Come is not like this world. In this world, upon good tidings one recites: Blessed...Who is good and does good, and over bad tidings one recites: Blessed...the true Judge. In the World-to-Come one will always recite: Blessed...Who is good and does good. There will be only one mode of blessing God for tidings. The verse states: “On that day shall the Lord be one and His name one.” The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of the word one in this context? Is that to say that now His name is not one? Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak said: The World-to-Come is not like this world. In this world, God’s name that is written with the letters *yod* and *heh* is read as *Adonai*, which begins with the letters *alef* and *dalet*. God’s name is not pronounced in the same way as it is written. However, in the World-to-Come it will all be one, as God’s name will be both read with the letters *yod* and *heh* and written with the letters *yod* and *heh*.

**Rabbi Yehuda Loew, Maharal, *Ner Mitzvah***

In this source, the Maharal utilizes a *midrash* about the *pesukim* in the beginning of *Bereshit* to show that both the exiles/suffering and the ultimate redemption are part of the plan of creation and that the existence of one necessitates the other.

ב"ר ב, ד) ריש לקיש פתח\* קרא במלכיות. "והארץ היתה תהו" (בראשית א, ב), זו מלכות בבל, שנאמר (ירמיה ד, כג) "ראיתי את הארץ והנה תהו". "ובהו" (בראשית שם), זו מלכות מדי, שנאמר\* (אסתר ו, יד) "ויבהילו להביא את המן". "וחשך" (בראשית שם), זו מלכות יון, שהחשיכה עיניהן של ישראל בגזירותיהן, שהיתה אומרת להם, כתבו על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק באלהי ישראל. "על פני תהום" (שם), זו מלכות הרשעה\*, שאין לה חקר כמו התהום. מה התהום הזה אין לו חק, אף הרשעים כן. "ורוח אלקים מרחפת" (שם), זה רוחו של מלך המשיח, היאך מה דאת אמר (ישעיה יא, ב) "ונחה עליו רוח ה'". באיזו זכות ממשמשת ובאה, "מרחפת על פני המים" (בראשית שם), בזכות התשובה שנמשלה כמים, שנאמר (איכה ב, יט) "שפכי כמים לבך" ... ובאור זה, כי ראוי שיהיו נרמזים אלו ד' מלכיות בראשית הבריאה. כי אלו ד' מלכיות שהם מושלים בעולם, לא היו רק בשביל כי אי אפשר שיהיה העולם, שהוא העלול מן השם יתברך, שיהיה העלול הזה בלא חסרון, רק נמצא עמו חסרון. והחסרון הזה הם ד' מלכיות, לפי שהמלכיות האלו ממעטים כבוד השם יתברך בעולמו.

**Summary:**

In this excerpt from the Maharal's *Ner Mitzvah*, he discusses the midrash from *Bereshit Rabbah* where Reish Lakish interprets the early verses of *Bereshit* as allegories for the four empires that oppressed Israel throughout history. He associates the terms "formless" and "void" with the Babylonian and Median kingdoms, respectively, indicating their chaos and lack of substance. "Darkness" is linked to the Greek empire, which is said to have darkened the spiritual vision of the Israelites with harsh decrees, including the command to deny their faith. The "deep" represents a wicked, unfathomable kingdom, implying a realm so corrupt that its depths cannot be understood. Finally, the "Spirit of God" that hovers over the waters symbolizes the *Mashiach*, whose coming is made possible by the merit of repentance, likened to water for its purifying qualities.

The Maharal suggests that these four kingdoms are hinted at the beginning of creation to imply that the world, emanating from the Divine, inherently contains imperfection represented by these oppressive realms. These kingdoms diminish God's glory in the world, highlighting a necessary aspect of the world's existence—that it includes

challenges and adversities, symbolized by these empires, which ultimately lead to the potential for redemption through repentance and the coming of the *Mashiach*.

**Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Excerpt from *Handbook of Jewish Thought Vol. 2***

**The coming of the Messiah and the subsequent redemption of Israel is a basic belief of Judaism.**

**God will bring the redemption in His own time. If all Israel were to return to God, the Messiah would appear and the final redemption would be ushered in immediately. Otherwise, the redemption will not occur until the final time decreed by God. This is the meaning of the verse, "I, God, will accelerate it in its due time" (*Isaiah 60:22*). That is, if Israel is worthy, God will hasten the redemption; if they are not, it will come, but only in its due time.**

**...There are many passages which indicate that the Messianic Era will be ushered in with miracles, such as, "In visions of the night, I beheld the likes of a human being who came with the clouds of heaven... and he was given... an everlasting dominion which will never pass away" (*Daniel 7:13-14*).**

**On the other hand, numerous passages indicate that the Messiah will come in a more prosaic manner, such as "Behold, your king comes to you... humble and riding upon a donkey" (*Zechariah 9:9*). Here again, we are taught that there are two basic ways in which the Messianic Era can commence. If Israel is worthy, it will indeed be accompanied by heavenly miracles. If not, the Messianic Era will arrive through an apparently natural unfolding of historical events. In either case, God Himself will guide the forces of history to eventually bring about the Messianic Era. Redemption will not come all at once, but gradually, in a natural manner...**

#### **ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY**

**Many of our traditions predict that there will be an extremely advanced technology in the Messianic Era. All disease will be eliminated, as the prophet foretold, "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.**

**Then the lame man will leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb will sing”  
(Isaiah 35:5-6).**

**In order that man devote himself totally to achieving spiritual perfection, many forms of labor will become obsolete. A number of miracles are predicted, such as grapes as large as hen’s eggs and grains of wheat as big as a fist. As we now know, all this can become possible with a technology not too far removed from that of today. Indeed, when Rabbi Gamliel spoke of these predicted miracles, he stated that they would not involve any change in the laws of nature, but are allusions to a highly advanced technology. Thus, so little labor will be needed to process agricultural products that clothing and loaves of bread will seem to grow on trees. Similarly, as we learn the secrets of all life processes, it will become possible to make trees bear fruit continually...**

**...our present technological revolution has also been predicted, with an approximate date as to its inception. Almost 2000 years ago, the *Zohar* predicted, “In the 600th year of the 6th millennium, the gates of wisdom on high and the wellsprings of lower wisdom will be opened. This will prepare the world to enter the 7th millennium, just as a person prepares himself toward sunset on Friday for the Sabbath. It is the same here. And the mnemonic for this is (*Genesis 7:11*), ‘In the 600th year... all the foundations of the great deep were split’.”**

**Here we see a clear prediction that in the Jewish year 5600 (1840 CE), the wellsprings of lower wisdom would be opened and there would be a sudden expansion of secular knowledge. Although the year 1840 did not yield any major scientific breakthrough, the date corresponds with almost uncanny accuracy to the onset of the present scientific revolution...**

**...The rapid changes on both a technological and sociological level will result in great social upheaval. The cataclysmic changes will result in considerable suffering, often referred to as the *Chevley Mashiach* or birth pangs of the Messiah. If the Messiah comes with miracles, these may be avoided, but the great changes involved in his coming in a natural manner may make these birth pangs inevitable.**

## **JEWISH UPHEAVALS**

**There is a tradition that the Jewish people will begin to despise the values of their religion in the generations preceding the coming of the Messiah... neither parents nor the aged will be respected, the old will have to seek favors from the young, and a person's household will become his enemies. Insolence will increase, people will no longer have respect, and none will offer correction. Religious studies will be despised and used by nonbelievers to strengthen their own claims; the government will become godless, academies places of immorality, and the pious denigrated.**

**Judaism will suffer greatly because of these upheavals. There is a tradition that the Jewish people will split up into various groups, each laying claim to the truth, making it almost impossible to discern true Judaism from the false. This is the meaning of the prophecy, "Truth will fail" (*Isaiah 59:15*).**

**It has also been predicted that a great wave of atheism would sweep the world. As a result, many would leave the fold of Judaism completely. This is how our sages interpret the prophecy, "Many will purify themselves... and be refined. But the wicked will do evil; not one of them will understand. Only the wise will understand" (*Daniel 12:10*). That is, only the wise will understand that this is a test from heaven and that they must stand firm in their faith.**

**Of course, there will be some Jews who remain loyal to their traditions. Still others will return to the true values of Judaism after having been estranged...But they will suffer all the more for this, and be dubbed fools for not conforming to the debased ways of the pre-Messianic period. This is the meaning of the prophecy, "He who departs from evil will be considered a fool" (*Isaiah 59:15*).**

**There is an apparent tradition that there will be a population explosion prior to the coming of the Messiah.**

**There is a tradition that if Israel does not repent, God will raise up a king like Haman who will want to annihilate the entire Jewish people. This may be the reason for Hitler's almost incomprehensible career.**



## RETURN TO ISRAEL

One of the most important traditions regarding the Messianic Era concerns the ingathering of the Diaspora and the resettlement of the Land of Israel. There are numerous traditions that the Jewish people will begin to return to the Land of Israel as a prelude to the Messiah. The ingathering will begin with a measure of political independence, and according to some, with the permission of the other nations.

As the holiest spot in the Land of Israel, Jerusalem is the most important city that must be rebuilt there. There is a tradition that the ingathering of the exile and the rebuilding of Jerusalem will go hand in hand as the two most important preludes to the coming of the Messiah. According to this tradition, first a small percentage of the exile will return to the Holy Land, and then Jerusalem will come under Jewish control and be rebuilt. Only then will the majority of Jews in the world return to their homeland. It is thus written, "God is rebuilding Jerusalem; [then] He will gather the dispersed of Israel" (*Psalms 147:2*).

There is a tradition that the Land of Israel will be cultivated at that time, after a long period of desolation. This is based on the prophecy, "O mountains of Israel, let your branches sprout forth; yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are at hand to come" (*Ezekiel 36:8*).

There is another important reason why the ingathering of the exile must precede the coming of the Messiah. One of our traditions regarding the advent of the Messianic Era is that it will mark the return of prophecy among the Jewish people. Furthermore, according to the final words ever spoken by a prophet, Elijah will return as a prophet and announce the coming of the Messiah, as it is written, "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of God" (*Malachi 3:23*). This is necessary because the Messiah will be a king, and a king can be anointed only by a prophet. Besides this, the Messiah himself will be a prophet, the greatest of them all, second only to Moses.

Thus, the restoration of prophecy is very important in the unfolding of the Messianic drama. This, however, requires a number of conditions. First of all, prophecy can usually take place only in the Land of Israel, and not in any other

land. The Land of Israel, however, is not conducive to prophecy at all times. Before prophecy can exist in the Land of Israel, it must be inhabited by the majority of Jews in the world. Thus, unless we assume that this rule is to be broken, more than half of the Jewish people will have to live in the Land of Israel before the Messianic Era commences.

### TEMPLE AND TRIBES

One of the most important events in the Messianic Era will be the rebuilding of the Holy Temple (*Beit HaMikdash*). Indeed, according to Maimonides, it is the act of building the Temple which will establish the identity of the Messiah beyond any shadow of a doubt. There are, however, many things involving the Temple which can only be ascertained prophetically, such as, for example, the precise location of the Altar. When Ezra rebuilt the Temple after the Babylonian exile, the place of the Altar had to be revealed prophetically, and the same will apparently be true when the Temple is rebuilt in the Messianic Ages.

Regarding the conquest of the Land of Israel, the Torah states, "Clear out the land and live in it" (*Numbers 33:53*). Many authorities maintain that this commandment remains in full force today.

There is a tradition that the Land of Israel will only be regained through great suffering. This has been fulfilled to obtain that part of the Land which we possess today.

Although some measure of political independence has been obtained in Israel, the complete ingathering of the exile will only be accomplished by the Messiah. Regarding this, the prophet foretold, "On that day, God will stretch forth His hand a second time to bring back the remnant of His people... He will hold up a banner for the nations, assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (*Isaiah 11:11-12*).

### GOG AND MAGOG

There is a tradition that there will be great suffering before the advent of the Messiah. We are thus taught, "One third of the world's woes will come in the generation preceding the Messiah."

There are prophecies that there will be a “War of Gog and Magog” around Jerusalem. According to this tradition, when the nations hear of the success of the Jewish people in rebuilding their land, they will gather to do battle against them near Jerusalem, led by Gog, the king of Magog. The battle will symbolize the final war between good and evil. In Jerusalem, all evil will ultimately be vanquished.

### LINEAGE

The Messiah of whom we have been speaking will be a direct descendent of King David, from the tribe of Judah. He is therefore known as Mashiach ben Dovid or Messiah the son of David. There is also a tradition that there will be another Messiah, from the tribe of Ephraim, the son of Joseph, who will precede Mashiach ben Dovid. He is therefore known as Mashiach ben Yosef or Mashiach ben Ephraim. There is a tradition that Israel’s enemies will only succumb to a descendant of Joseph. Thus, Mashiach ben Yosef will be the one who will lead Israel to victory in the war of Gog and Magog. This is the meaning of the verse, “The house of Jacob will be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble. They will set them ablaze, and consume them; there will be no survivor of the house of Esau, for God has spoken” (*Ovadiah 1:18*)...

...Concerning the relationship between the two Messiahs...he prophet declared, “Ephraim’s envy will depart and Judah’s adversaries will be cut off. Ephraim will not envy Judah, and Judah will not harass Ephraim” (*Isaiah 11:13*). That is, each Messiah will perform his appointed task, without jealousy...

According to ancient tradition, the initial Messiah will fight and be killed in the war of Gog and Magog. He will be mourned by all Israel, as it is written, “They shall look to Me because they have thrust him through, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns his first born son” (*Zechariah 12:10*).

Before the appearance of the final Messiah, a prophet will arise to announce his coming and to draw the Jewish people back to God. This prophet is referred to as Elijah the prophet. It is thus written, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of God” (*Malachi 3:23*). His primary task will be to bring peace to the world by leading all people back to God. The prophecy thus concludes, “He will turn the ears of the fathers to their

children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I [God] come and strike the world with destruction" (*ibid.* 3:24).

There is a tradition that Elijah will reveal himself sometime after the war of Gog and Magog, immediately before Mashiach ben Dovid appears.

Some maintain that Elijah is a kohen, who will serve as the High Priest in the days of the Messiah, in the Third Temple.

#### Ba'al HaSulam, *Sefer Matan Torah*, on the Completion of the Zohar 34-35

והמופת הוא שאין שום אדם מתרגש כלל מן הגאולה, כמו שהיה צריך להיות בזמן הגאולה אחרי ב' אלפים שנה. ולא בלבד שאין בני הגולה מתפעלים לבוא אלינו ולהנות מן הגאולה, אלא גם חלק גדול מאותם שנגאלו וכבר יושבים בתוכנו, המה מצפים בכליון עינים להפטר מגאולה זו ולשוב לארצות פזוריהם. הרי שאף על פי שהקב"ה הוציא הארץ מרשות האומות ונתנה לנו, עם כל זה אנו עוד לא קבלנוה, ואין אנו נהנים מזה כלום. אלא שבנתינה זו נתן לנו הקב"ה את ההזדמנות לגאולה, דהיינו להטהר ולהתקדש ולקבל עלינו עבודת ה' בתורה ובמצוות לשמה. אז יבנה בית המקדש ונקבל את הארץ לרשותנו, ואז נחוש ונרגיש בשמחת הגאולה. אבל כל עוד שלא באנו לזה, שום דבר לא נשתנה, ואין שום הפרש בין נימוסי הארץ עתה מכפי שהיתה עדיין תחת ידי זרים, הן במשפט הן בכלכלה והן בעבודת ה', ואין לנו אלא הזדמנות לגאולה.

And the proof is that no one is excited about redemption as he should be during the time of redemption for which we have waited two thousand years. Not only are the members of the diaspora not moved to join us and benefit from the redemption, but many of those who were redeemed and are already dwelling among us, are yearning to rid themselves of this redemption and return to the diaspora. Even though the Holy One, blessed be He, has taken the land of Israel out of foreign authorities and gave it to us, we have not yet received it. Nor do we enjoy any of it.

But with this giving, the Holy One, blessed be He, gave us the chance for redemption, that is, to be purified and sanctified and accept upon us God's service through engaging in the Torah and the commandments for their own sake. Then will the Temple be built and we will receive the land as our own, and

sense and feel the joy of redemption. But as long as we do not reach it, nothing will change and there will be no difference between the customs of the land now and as they used to be under foreign rule in law, economy, and God's service; and we have but the opportunity for redemption.

Rabbi Yisrael Lifshitz, *Boaz on Mishne Brachot 9:3*

אב"י כוונת ע"ר אאמ"ו צוק"ל הכ"מ. דיצה"ט הוא כח לישות ואהבת החריצות והזריזות והשתדלות. ובהכח הזה ישתמש האדם למ"ע. ויצה"ר הוא כח שלילי. וסרבנות ועצלות לבלי לפעול. ובזה הכח ישתמש למצות ל"ת להתעצל ולבלי לעבור חוק. ול"מ נ"ל עוד לפרש דעבודה לה' בשני היצרים. הוא יכול להיות באופן זה שישתמש אדרבא באש דיצה"ר כמו החמדה. והתאוה. והכעס. והגאווה. והקנאה. להתלהב עצמו לפעולת המצוה ולעשיית מע"ט. נמצא משתמש ביצה"ר למ"ע. ובקרירות ומנוחת היצ"ט ישתמש לעכב ולקרר עצמו לבלי לעבור על מצות ל"ת. וזהו אלכעמיא נפלאה. שבאמצעות החכמה הזאת חפשו וחקרו להפך כל המתכיים לזהב. וכל טרחתם היה לשוא. אבל על דרך היראה באמת נוכל להפך המתכיים המזולזלים של התאוות לזהב מזוקק שבעתיים (ישעיה ס' י"ז) וכמו שנאמר ברחל ותקנא רחל באחותה וכמ"ש באליהו קנא קנאתי. או לחשב בעצמו מי אנכי בן מלך להתגולל עצמי בעפר ארץ החומרי. ובזה מובן ג"כ המאמר תמוה (בפ"ה מ"ה דאבות) דיהודה ב"ת אומר הוי עז כנמר וכו' דקשה. הכי יעלה על דעת שנאמר לאדם כשנרצה לזרז אותו לשלימות. שיהיה כחיות רעות טורפי טרף. והלא היה טוב ונאות יותר לומר היה כאחד מהגדולים והטובים בארץ שהיו לפניך כאברהם יצחק ויעקב ומשה ואהרן וכדומה. אבל הכונה הוא לגלות לנו החכמה הנפלאה. איך נוכל להפך התאוות הרעות לסבות אמצעיות להוציא מע"ט מהכח להפעל. והנה ישנם ד' מדות רעות העומדות בראש כל התאוות והמדות המושחתות והם. א' עזות מצח ודמיונו הנמר שהוא עז שבחיות. ב' מדת הגאווה והגאון וציורו ודמיונו הנשר המגבי' עוף על כל בעל כנפיים. ג' מדת הקלות דעת לבלי לחשוב במתינות על הנולד מכל מעשה אלא לעשותה במהירות. ודמיונו הוא הצבי בקלות ומהירות מרוצתו. ד' מדת הקשיות עורף אשר דמיונו הארי. אשר לא ישוב מפני כל בהלחמו עם אחת מן החיות. ואם ירצה דרך משל אדם לסע לעיר רחוקה בזמן קצר. אזי לא יאסר לפני רכבו זבובים חלשים. הזוחלים לאט לאט. שבאמת אין היושב על המרכבה כזאת בסכנה ליפול ממנה. אבל גם לא יבא אל תכליתו. אך בהיפך יאסר לפני רכבו סוסים דוהרים ודולקים באש הכח והמהירות. וכאשר המוליך את העגלה בידו החזקה ובעין פקיאח יבין לנהג מרכבתו על דרך הישר. חיש מהר יבא שלם אל מטרת עוז תכליתו. וכן הוא עם האדם עלי ארץ שהוא בדמות דיוקנו של מעלה יושב על מרכבה של ד' חיות בוערות באש המהירות. ואעפ"כ לא יפול רוכבו אחור. אלא בהשתמש בחכמה בהחיות האלו למעשה העבודה. במהרה יבא אל עיר תכליתו הנקרא "רצון אביך שבשמים":

**Summary:**

The source talks about how a person's *yetzer hara* can be harnessed for good. In other words, "bad" qualities can be made into "good" as long as they are directed toward serving God. The author maintains that that is what it means when the Sages say to serve God "*bechol levavecha*" (with all your heart). The reference is to both your good and bad inclination, both are actively directed to serving God.