

WHAT THE RABBONIM SAY
ABOUT MOSHIACH

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PREFACE

This present volume is a setting down of principal rabbinic texts as have been traditionally and historically understood to present a picture of Moshiach and his work by some of the foremost exponents of rabbinical Judaism. Every age of Jewish crises has precipitated a renewed interest in messianic expectation. Our own age of impending and mounting crises will undoubtedly result in the same. It behooves us, therefore, to examine the core of their ideas to be ready for this soon-coming time.

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אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, בביאת המשיח.
ואף על פי שיתמהמה, עם כל-זה אחכה-לו, כל-יום שיבוא.

**“I believe with perfect faith in the coming of
Moshiach. Though he tarry, nonetheless, I will
await him every day, that he will come.”**

- Maimonides

CHAPTER 1

THE GREATNESS OF MOSHIACH

**Moshiach to be given all of the kingdoms of the world
as his inheritance:**

דניאל ז יג
חזה הוית בחזוי ליליא וארו עם-ענני שמיא כבר אנש
אתה הוה ועד-עתיק יומיא מטה וקדמוהי הקרבוהי:
ולה יהיב שלטון ויקר ומלכו וכל עממיא אמיא ולשניא
לה יפלחון שלטנה שלטון עלם די-לא יעדה ומלכותה
די-לא תתחבל:¹

*“I saw in the visions of the night, and behold with the
clouds of heaven, one like a man was coming, and he came
up to the Ancient of Days and was brought before Him.
And He gave him dominion and glory and a kingdom, and
all peoples, nations, and tongues shall serve him; his
dominion is an eternal dominion, which will not be*

¹ Rabbi Nosson Scherman, ed., *Tanach*, The Stone Edition (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1996), Daniel 7:13-14, p. 1797.

removed, and his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13,14)¹

Rashi states that the one who “came up to the Ancient of Days” in the above passage whom “all nations and tongues shall serve” is King Moshiach:

רש"י: דניאל פרק ז יג
כבר אנש אתה. הוא מלך המשיח: ועד עתיק יומיא שכיח
יושע צמישפט וזן את האומות.

Rashi:

“One like a man was coming – That is the King Messiah...And...up to the Ancient of Days – Who was sitting in judgment and judging the nations...”²

Ramban (Nachmanides) also identifies the “one like a man” in Daniel 7:13 above as Moshiach whom “all peoples, nations and tongues shall serve.” Furthermore, he states that Moshiach would exceed all men in his knowledge of the Almighty:

רמב"ן:
ויתכן החכמה למעלתו של משיח וקרבתו אל אלקים, כי אברהם שקראו ה' הנכבד והנורא אוהבו, וכרת עמו ברית חדשה שהיה קרוב לה' מכל בני אדם, ומלאכי השרת עומדים לפניו בימינו ובשמאלו, כולם אינם קרובים אליו בידיעת ה' כמשיח, כי כן כתוב: ועד עתיק יומיא מטה וקדמוהי הקרבוהי (דניאל ז יג)...³

Ramban:

“And wisdom will accompany this elevation of Messiah, and his nearness to God: for neither Abraham, whom the glorious and fearful Name

¹ A. J. Rosenberg, trans., *Mikraoth Gedolot: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah; A New English Translation* (New York: The Judaica Press, 2000), pp. 67, 68.

² Ibid. p. 67.

³ Shaval, Rabbi Chaim Dov. *P'rushei HaRamban al Neviim v'Ketuvim*. (Jerusalem: Boys Town Jerusalem Press, 1963), p. 87.

speaks as his *friend* (**Isaiah 41:8**), and with whom also he made a covenant; nor Moses, who was nearer to the Deity than any man; nor the ministering angels, who ‘stand round about him on his right hand and on his left’ (**II Kings 22:29**), approach so closely to the knowledge of the Almighty as the Messiah; for of him it is written that he ‘came to the Ancient of days,’ and that they ‘brought him near to him’ (**Daniel 7:13**).”¹

Malbim likewise attributes “one like the son of man” in Daniel 7:13 to be King Moshiach and states that this one chosen by God will come in human form:

מלבים: דניאל ז יג
ותחת שאלה באו בצורת חיות טורפות בא בחיר ה' בתואר בן
אנוש...והחיות באו מתהום רבה וכן אנוש הלז הנוחל מלכות
שמים יבא עם העננים, שהעננים הם אדים הדקים מלאי רוח
קל העולה מן המים והליחות...וכן תהיה ביאתו ע"י טל הרוחני
...כמ"ש כי טל אורות טלך וביאתו תתיחס לשמים לא לתהום
רבה.²

Malbim:

“...unlike those who appeared as beasts of prey, the one chosen by God will come in human form...Furthermore, the beasts emerged from the great deep, whereas the man who inherits the kingdom of Heaven will emerge from the clouds, which are composed of vapor that rises from the water and moisture...similarly, the Messiah will come through spiritual dew...Since these are spiritual rather than material matters, his coming is attributed to the heavens rather than the great deep.”³

¹ S. R. Driver, A. D. Neubauer, Edited by Prof. Harry M. Orlinsky, *The Fifty Third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1969), Vol. I (English translation), pp. 79, 80.

² Meir Loeb ben Y'hiel Mikhael (Malbim) *Perush HaMalbim al Mikrei Kodesh* (Israel: Meshor Holy Books, 1998), *Commentary on Daniel 7:13*.

³ Rosenberg (English translation), p. 66.

In Sukkah 52a, we are told that all the nations of the world are to be given to Moshiach as an inheritance (in commentary on Psalm 2:7,8):

סוכה דף נב א
תנו רבנן: משיח בן דוד שעתיד להגלות במהרה בימינו,
אומר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: שאל ממני דבר ואתן לך, שנאמר
(תהלים ב ז, ח) אספרה אל חוק וגו' אני היום ילדתיך שאל ממני
ואתנה גוים נחלתך.¹

Talmud, Sukkah 52a:

“Our Rabbis have taught us in a Mishna with reference to Messiah who is about to be revealed quickly, that the Holy One, blessed be He, says to him, ‘Ask of Me,’ for it is said [Psalm 2:7–8], ‘I will declare the decree. Ask of me and I will give the nations for thine inheritance.’”²

Midrash Alpha Betot states that all the kings of the world will serve him and bring him presents:

מדרש אלפ"א ביתו"ת תלח
מלמד שיבא משיח על ישראל ויכניס גליותיהן של ישראל
לירושלים ובונה את ירושלים... וכל מלכי אומות העולם באין
לפתחו של משיח ומשמשין לפניו ומביאין לו דורון.³

Midrash Alpha Betot:

“The Messiah will arise over Israel, will gather the exiles of Israel to Jerusalem, and will rebuild Jerusalem.... And all the kings of the world will come to the door of the Messiah and will serve him and bring him presents.”⁴

¹ Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein, ed., *Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1979). Sukkah 52a.

² Ibid.

³ Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot* (Jerusalem: KTAB Waspher, 1968; Twenty-five Midrashim published for the first time from manuscripts discovered in the genizoth of Jerusalem and Egypt), Vol. 2, תלח.

⁴ Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts*, Midrash Alpha Betot 2:438–42 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979; (English translation), p.153.

Moshiach's dominion to be greater than Solomon's:

מדרש רבה מדבר נשא יד
הקערה והמזרק הקריב כנגד מלכי בית דויד שעתידים לעמד ממנו
שמלכו בכפה בים וביבשה כגון שלמה ומלך המשיח שלמה מנין
דכתיב (מ"א ה ד) 'כי הוא רדה בכל עבר הנהר מתפסח ועד עזה'...
מלך המשיח מנין דכתיב (שם עב ח) 'וירד מים עד ים ומנהר
עד אפסי ארץ'.¹

Midrash Rabbah Numbers, Seder Naso, 14:

“He offered the dish and the basin as symbols of the kings of the house of David who would in time to come spring from him and would reign supreme on sea and on land, kings like Solomon and the King Messiah. How do we know it of Solomon? Because it is written, *‘For he had dominion over all the region of this side the River, from Tipsah even to Gaza.’*

(I Kings 5:4)...How do we know the same of the King Messiah? Because it is written [Psalm 72:8], *‘He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River unto the ends of the earth.’*²

Shimon ben Yochai states that Moshiach will sit at the right hand of HaShem (Psalm 110):

תפלת ר' שמעון בן יוחאי:
...וישמע ארמילוס כי עמד לישראל מלך ומקבץ חיילות
כל או"ה ויבאו למלך המשיח ולישראל והק"בה ילחם
בעד ישראל ואומר למשיח שב לימיני (תהלים קי א) והמשיח
אומר לישראל התקבצו והתיצבו וראו את ישועת ה'.³

T'fillat R. Shimon ben Yochai:

“Armilus will hear that a king arose for Israel, and he

¹ Moshe Ariyeh Mirkin, ed., *Midrash Rabbah Numbers* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh Publishing House, 1960), Seder Naso, 14.

² Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., Judah J. Slotki, trans., *Midrash Rabbah Numbers* (London, New York: Soncino Press, 1983), Vol. II, XIII. 14, pp. 527, 528.

³ Aharon Jellinek, “T'fillat R. Shim'on ben Yohai,” *Bet haMidrash* (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1967), part 4, p. 125.

will gather the armies of all the nations of the world, and they will come to King Messiah and to Israel. And the Holy one, blessed be He, will fight for Israel and will say to the Messiah: 'Sit at my right.' [Psalm 110:1] And the Messiah will say to Israel: 'Gather together and stand and see the salvation of the Lord.'"¹

Pesikta Rabbati states that the "light" in Isaiah 60:1 is the light of the Moshiach that the congregation of Israel is looking for as from a watchtower...he will swallow up Satan and his princely counterparts:

פסיקתא רבתי לו
קומי אורי כי בא אורך וכבוד ה' עליך זרח
כי הנה החושך יכסה ארץ וערפל לאמים
ועליך יזרח ה' וכבודו עליך יראה (ישעיה ס א וב)

זה שנאמר ברוח הקודש ע"י דוד
מלך ישראל כי עמך מקור חיים באורך נראה אור (תהלים לו י)
...מהו באורך נראה אור. איזה אור שכנסת ישראל מצפה.
זה אורו של משיח שנאמר וירא אלהים את האור כי טוב
(בראשית א ד). מלמד שצפה הקדוש ברוך הוא במשיח
ובמעשיו קודם שנברא העולם (וגס) [וגנזו] למשיחו לדורו
תחת כסא הכבוד שלו (ג) אמר השטן לפני הקדוש ברוך
הוא [רבונו של עולם אור שנגזו תחת כסא הכבוד שלך למי.
א"ל למי שהוא עתיד להחזירך ולהכלימך בבושת פנים.
א"ל רבונו של עולם הראהו לי. אמר לו בא וראה אותו.
וכיון שראה אותו נזדעזע ונפל על פניו ואמר בודאי זהו
משיח שהוא עתיד להפיל לי ולכל שרי אומות העולם
בגיהנם שנאמר ובלע המות לנצח ומחה ה' אלהים דמעה מעל
כל פנים (ישעיה כה ח). [באותה שעה התרגשו האומות] אמרו
לפניו רבונו עולם מי הוא זה שאנחנו נופלים בידו. מה שמו.
מה טיבו. אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא [הוא] משיח.²

¹ Patai (English translation), *T'fillat R. Shim'on ben Yohai* (BhM 4:124-26), p. 159.

² *Pesikta Rabbati* (Jerusalem: Dovidovitz, 1880; reprint, photographed, 1960, tel. 02-286337), Piska 36.

Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 36:

“Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon thee the Lord will arise, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.”

(Isaiah 60:1,2).

“These words are to be considered in the light of what David king of Israel was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *‘For with thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light do we see light.’ (Psalm 36:10)*... What is meant by *‘in Thy light do we see light?’* What light is it that the congregation of Israel looks for as from a watchtower? It is the light of the Messiah of which it is said *‘And God saw the light that it was good’ (Genesis 1:4)*. This verse proves that the Holy One, blessed be He, contemplated the Messiah and his works before the world was created, and then under His throne of glory put away His Messiah until the time of the generation in which he will appear.

“...Satan said: ‘Master of the universe, show him to me.’ God replied: ‘Come and see him.’ And when he saw him, Satan was shaken, and he fell on his face and said: ‘Surely, this is the Messiah who will cause me and all the counterparts in heaven of the princes of the earth’s nations to be swallowed up in Ghenna, as it is said *He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces’ (Isaiah 25:8)*. In that hour all princely counterparts of the nations in agitation, will say to Him: ‘Master of the universe, who is this through whose power we are to be swallowed up? What kind of being is he?’ The Holy One, blessed be He, will reply: ‘He is the Messiah...’”¹

¹ Rabbi William G. Braude, trans. (Rabbi, Congregation Sons of Israel and David; Providence Rhode Island), *Pesikta Rabbati* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), Piska 36, p. 677.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHARACTER OF MOSHIACH

Midrash Tanhuma calls Moshiach Son of David “My servant” in Isaiah 52:13 and says that he shall be exalted more than Abraham, extolled more than Moses:

מידרש תנחומא פרשת תולדות יד
שיר למעלות אשא עיני אל-ההרים וגו' (תהלים קכא א).
זה שאמר הכתוב, מי-אתה הר-הגדול לפני זרבבל
למישר (זכריה ד ז), זה משיח בן דוד. ולמה נקרא שמו
הר-גדול? שהוא גדול מן האבות, שנאמר, הנה
ישכיל עבדי ירום ונשא וגבה מאד (ישעיה נב יג). ירום
מאברהם ונשא מיצחק וגבה מיעקוב. ירום מאברהם,
שנאמר, הרמתי ידי אל- ה' (בראשית יד כב). ונשא ממשה
שנאמר, כי-תאמר אלי שאהו בחיקן (במדבר יא יב)
וגבה ממלאכי השרת, שנאמר, וגבתם מלאת עינים (יחזקאל א יח).¹

¹ *Midrash Tanhuma* (Bnei Barak: Seifri Or Haim, 1998), Parasha Toldot, 14.

Midrash Tanhuma, Parasha Toldot 14:

“*Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain*’ (**Zechariah 4:7**). This refers to Messiah the Son of David. And why is he called ‘*The Great*’? – Because he is greater than the Patriarchs as it is written ‘*Behold My servant shall deal wisely, He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high*’ (**Isaiah 52:13**). He shall be more exalted than Abraham of whom it is said ‘*I lift up my hand*’ the same Hebrew word (“rum” – “harimoti”) (**Genesis 14:22**). He shall be more extolled than Moses of whom it is said, ‘*As the nursing father beareth the nursing child*’ (same Hebrew word “nasa” – “yisa”) (**Numbers 11:12**). ‘*And shall be very high,*’ that is higher than the ministering angels, of whom it is said, ‘*And as for their rims, they were so high*’ (the word ‘rims’ also has the same sound as ‘high’ in Hebrew) (**Ezekiel 1:18**).”¹

Moshiach is said to be the highest in intelligence of all men and “is perfect” says medieval philosopher Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin² in commentary on the above midrash, stating that the chastisements that come upon Moshiach are not from any sin or deficiency on his part but rather for our sakes:

משה הכהן ז"ל בן קרשפן:
הנה ישכיל עבדי... שישכיל ויגיע בהגשת שכלו למעלה גדולה מאד ממעלת כל האנשים השלמים שהיו בעולם. ירום ונשא וגבה מאד (ישעיה נב יג) דרשו רז"ל ירום מאברהם ונשא ממשה...וזה ונשא יותר ממנו כי בקבצו את נפוצותינו מארבע כנפות הארץ יתנשא בעיני כל המלכים אשר בכל העולם וכלם יעבדוהו וינשאוהו עליהם וכן יבא עליו דניאל ואמ' וכל עממיא אמיא ולישניא ליה יפלחון.
...וגבה משלמה שגבהה מעלתו עד שנא' בו וישב שלמה על כסא יי

¹ Samuel A. Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma-yelammedenu* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, Inc.), parasha Toldot 14, p. 183.

² As a philosopher, Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin offers us insight into the existing opinions of his day.

למלך ואמרו ז"ל שמלך על העליונים ועל התחתונים. ומלך המשיח
 שתהיה השגתו בשכלו תגבה מעלתו יותר ממנו. מאד ממלאכי
 השרת שתהיה השגתו בשכלו קרובה מהשגתם וזאת
 מעלה רבה עד מאד שיגיע מורכב מחומר...
 וכשיוולד עבד יי זה מיום שיעמוד על דעתו יהיה תמיד פרוש
 להשכיל ולהשיג מהאל ית' כל מה שאיפשר להשיג עד אשר יגיע
 למעלה שלא עלה אליה היסורין עליו מצד דאגתו עליו ולא בעבור
 שום חסרון או שום חטא בעולם שיהיה בו עד שיהיה נענש
 ביסורין ובמכאובות כי הוא שלם בתכלית השלמות כמו שאמ' עליו
 הנביא ונחה עליו רוח יי וגו'...¹ (ישעיה יא ב)

Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin:

"Behold my servant shall have understanding...in virtue of his comprehensive intelligence he will attain to an elevation above that even of the most perfect men in the world. He shall be high and exalted, and lofty exceedingly [Isaiah 52:13]. According to the Midrash of our Rabbis; 'he will be higher than Abraham, more exalted than Moses.... This one will be exalted far above Moses: for when he gathers together our scattered ones from the four corners of the earth, he will be exalted in the eyes of all the kings in the whole world, and all will serve him, and will exalt him above them as Daniel prophesies concerning him, 'All nations and tongues shall serve him' (Daniel 7:14,27).

"He will be loftier than Solomon, whose dignity was so lofty that he is said to *'sit on the throne of the Lord' (I Chronicles 29:23)*...But the King Messiah, in his all-comprehending intelligence, will be loftier than Solomon. [He will be] exceedingly above the ministering angels, because that same comprehensive intelligence will approach [God] more nearly than theirs. For it is an exceedingly high privilege, that one whose nature is compound and material should

¹ S. R. Driver, A. D. Neubauer, Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin, Vol. I, pp. 97, 98 (taken from Bodleian Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University, UK).

attain to a grade of intelligence more nearly Divine than that which belongs to the incorporeal...

“And when this *‘servant of the Lord’* is born, from the day when he comes to years of discretion, he will continue to be marked by the possession of intelligence enabling him to acquire from God what it is impossible for any to acquire until he reaches that height whither none of the sons of men, except him, have ever ascended...and all the chastisements which come upon him in consequence of his grief will be for our sakes, and not from any deficiency or sin on his part which might bring punishment in their train, because he is perfect, in the completeness of perfection, as Isaiah says [‘and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him’]...” (11:2 f.)¹

Rabbi Hayyim Vital, in his *Sefer Hagilgulim*, echoes Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin’s lofty sentiments about Moshiaich:

ר' חיים ויטל בספר הגילגולים אמר:
ודע כי נשמה לנשמה מזיהרא עילאה לא זכה עליו עדיין שום נברא
בעולם ומלך המשיח עתיד ליטלה ולכן נאמר עליו הנה ישכיל עבדי
ירום ונשא וגו' ואמרו ז"ל ירום מאברהם מאד מאדה"ר²

Rabbi Hayyim Vital:

“You must know also that the soul of celestial splendour no created being in the world has ever yet been worthy to obtain: the King Messiah, however, will receive it: it is accordingly said of him, *‘He shall be high and exalted,’* [Isaiah 52:13], etc., or as our Rabbis say, ‘He shall be higher than Abraham, exceedingly above Adam!’”³

¹ Driver and Neubauer (English translation), pp. 101-103.

² Vital, Hayyim ben Joseph, *Sefer HaGigulim* (Vilna: Avraham Tsvi Katzinelinboigen, 1967), p. 57.

³ Driver and Neubauer (English translation), p. 395.

Rashi speaks about the *humility* of Moshiach in his comments on Exodus 4:20, saying that the same donkey that Abraham saddled for the binding of Isaac is the same one that Moshiach is destined to ride upon:

רש"י: שמות פרק ד כ
"על החמור" חמור המיוחד, הוא החמור שחנש אברהם
לעקידת יצחק, והוא שעתיד מלך המשיח להגלות
עליו, שנאמר "עני ורוכב על חמור" (זכריה ט ט)

Rashi:

"mounted them upon the donkey." The designated donkey. That is the donkey that Abraham saddled for the binding of Isaac, and that is the one upon whom the King Messiah is destined to appear, as it is said: *'humble, and riding a donkey' (Zechariah 9:9).*¹

Rashi, in commentary on Isaiah 26:6, tells us that Moshiach is referred to as a poor man:

רש"י: ישעיה פרק כו ו
רגלי עני. מלך המשיח שנאמר בו עני ורוכב על חמור
(זכריה ט ט)

Rashi:

"The feet of a poor man." The King Messiah, who is referred to as a poor man riding on a donkey (**Zechariah 9:9**).²

Rav Saadia Gaon speaks of the humility of Moshiach, yet accompanied by the "clouds of heaven" (Daniel 7:13):

רב סעדיה גאון:

¹ *Complete Tanach with Rashi, Commentary on Exodus*, CD ROM (Chicago, IL: Davka Corporation, 1988), used by permission.

² *Commentary on Isaiah*, CD ROM (Chicago, IL: Davka Corporation, 1988), used by permission.

והלא כתיב על משיח עני ורוכב על חמור אלא יבא בענוה
כי לא יבא על סוסים בגאות ואשר כתב עם ענני שמיא
והנה עם ענני השמים הם מלאכי צבא השמי¹

Rav Saadia Gaon:

“...as a sign of humility, the Messiah will come riding on a donkey [Zechariah 9:9]. He will, however, be accompanied by the clouds of heaven [Daniel 7:13], i.e. the angels of heaven.”²

¹ Rosenberg, p. 67.

² Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

TITLES GIVEN TO MOSHIACH

Various designations for Moshiach are seen in the writings of the rabbonim. The following are some of them:

SERVANT:

The Midrash Tehilim (Psalms) makes the “*servant*” in Isaiah 52:13 and Isaiah 42:1 to be Moshiach:

מדרש תהלים מזמור ב
וכתיב בחוקה נביאים הנה ישכיל עבדי (ישעיה נב יג),
(מט) וכתיב בתריה הן עבדי אתמך בו [בחירי רצתה נפשי]
(שם מב א), וכתיב בחוקה של כתובים נאם ה' לאדוני שב
לימיני (תהלים קי א), וכתיב ה' אמר אלי בני אתה (תהלים ב ז) ...
אמר ר' יודן (נא) כל הנחמות הללו (נב) בחוקן של מלך
מלכי המלכים הן (נג) לעשותן למלך המשיח...¹

¹ Solomon Buber, *Midrash Tehilim* (Jerusalem: Vilna, 1966), Mizmor Beit, p. 28.

Midrash Tehilim:

“In the decree of the prophets it is written ‘Behold My servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high’ (**Isaiah 52:13**), and it is also written ‘Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth’ (**Isaiah 42:1**). In the decree of the writings it is written, ‘The Lord said unto my lord: Sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.’ (**Psalms 110:1**)...and it is written, ‘The Lord said to me, you are my son’ (**Psalms 2:7**)...R. Yudan said: ‘All these goodly promises are in the decree of the King, the King of kings, who will fulfill them for the lord Messiah.’”¹

Midrash Tanhuma Yelammedenu also makes the “servant” in Isaiah 52:13 to be Moshiach:

מדרש תנחומא פרשה תולדות יד
מי-אתה הר-גדול לפני זרובבל למישר (זכריה ד ז), זה משיח בן
דוד, ולמה נקרא שמו הר-הגדול. שהוא גדול מן האבות, שנאמר
הנה ישכיל עבדי ירום ונשא וגבה מאד (ישעיה נב יג)²

Midrash Tanhuma:

“Who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubbabel?
Thou shalt become a plain (**Zechariah 4:7**). This verse refers to Messiah, the descendant of David. Why was he called a great mountain? Because he will be greater than the patriarchs, as it is said: Behold, My servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up; and shall be very high (**Isaiah 52:13**).”³

¹ Rabbi William G. Braude; trans., Leon Nemroy, ed., *Midrash on the Psalms* (New Haven: Yale Judaica Series, Volume XIII), Book One, Psalm 2:9.

² Etz and Anaf Joseph, *Midrash Tanhuma* (Jerusalem: “Eshkol” J. S. Weinfeld, 1972), Parasha Toldot, 14.

³ Samuel A. Berman, trans., *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* (Hoboken: KTAV, 1966), Genesis 6:14, p. 182.

Metsudat David likewise makes the “servant” in Isaiah 42:1 to be Moshiach:

מצודת דוד: ישעיה מב א
הן עבדי. הנה עבדי אשר אתמוך בו והוא מלך המשיח...

Metsudat David:
“Behold My servant whom I support – and he is king
Messiah.”¹

Redak, similarly, in his commentary on Isaiah 42:1, states:

רד"ק: ישעיה מב א
הן עבדי. זהו מלך המשיח

Redak:
“Behold My servant...King Messiah.”²

SHILO:

Rashi in commentary on Genesis 49:10 says: “until Shilo comes the king Messiah”:

רש"י: בראשית פרק מט י
לא יסור שבט מיהודה מדוד ואילך אלו ראשי גלויות שצצבו
(סנהדרין ה), שרודים את העם צצצט, הממונים על פי המלכות:
ומחקק מבין רגליו. תלמידים, אלו נשיאי ארץ ישראל: עד כי
יבא שילה. מלך המשיח שהמלוכה שלו, וכן תרגמו אונקלוס.

Rashi, Genesis 49:10:
“The scepter will not depart from Judah from David and
thereafter. These (who bear the scepter after the
termination of the kingdom) are the exilarchs

¹ A. J. Rosenberg, trans., *Mikraot Gedolot, a New Translation, Isaiah* (New York: The Judaica Press, 1983), Vol. II, p. 336.

² Ibid.

Rambam also calls the “Branch” (Shoot, Zemah) “Moshiach” in Zech. 6:12 comparing it to the “root out of dry ground” (Is. 53:2) in his Letter to Yemen:

רמב"ם אמר באגרת תימן:
אבל איכות עמידתו, דע שלא תדע עמידתו קודם היותה, עד שיאמר
עליו שהוא בן פלוני וממשפחה פלונית, אבל יעמוד איש שלא נודע
קודם הראותו והאותות והמופתים שיראו על ידו הן הן הראיות על
אמתת יחוסו, שכן אמר הב"ה כשספר לנו ענין זה, הנה איש צמח
שמו ומתחתיו וצמח. (זכריה ו יב) ואמר ישעיהו כמו כן כשיראה
מבלי שידע לן אב ואם ומשפחה ויעל כיונק לפניו וכשרש וגו'.
(ישעיה נג ב)¹

Rambam, “Letter to Yemen”:

“As for the advent of Messiah, nothing at all will be known about it before it occurs. The Messiah is not a person concerning whom it may be predicted that he will be the son of so and so. On the contrary he will be unknown before his coming, but he will prove by means of miracles and wonders that he is the true Messiah. Scripture in allusion to his mysterious lineage says, *‘His name is Shoot, and he will shoot up out of his place’* (**Zechariah 6:12**). Similarly, Isaiah referring to the arrival of the Messiah implies that neither his father nor mother nor his kith nor kin will be known, *‘For he will shoot up right forth as a sapling, and as a root out of the dry ground’* (**Isaiah 53:2**).”²

¹ Abraham S. Halkin, *Moses Maimonides’ Epistle to Yemen*, Edited from manuscripts; English translation by Boaz Cohen (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1952), Pincus, pp. 89 and 91.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 91.

LEPER SCHOLAR:

“Leper Scholar” is the name given to Moshiach in Isaiah 53:4 by the Talmud:

סנהדרין צח ב
רבנן אמרי: חיורא דבי רבי שמו שנאמר (ישעיה ג) אכן חליינו
הוא נשא ומכאבינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבנהו נגוע מכה אלהים ומענה.

Sanhedrin 98b:

“The Rabbis said: His name is ‘the leper scholar,’ as it is written [Isaiah 53:4], ‘*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: but we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God, and afflicted.*’”¹

MENACHEM:

The Talmud gives Menachem as another title of Moshiach:

סנהדרין צח ב
ויש אומרים מנחם בן חזקיה שמו, שנאמר (איכה א)
כי רחוק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי.

Sanhedrin 98b:

“Others say: His name is Menachem the son of Hezekiah, for it is written [Lamentations 1:16], Because Menachem [‘the comforter’], that would relieve my soul, is far.”²

¹ *Soncino Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b*, CD ROM (Chicago, IL: Davka Corporation, 1988), used by permission.

² *Ibid.*

MOSHIACH BEN YOSEPH:

From Hai Gaon (d. 1038), considered by the well-known historian Solomon Graetz to be “an unprejudiced sage, who loved light and avoided darkness,” comes this appraisal of Moshiach ben Yoseph, bringing in some geographical aspects of Messiah’s life as well:

תשובת שאלה לרבינו האי גאון ז"ל על ענין הישועה:
ובעת ההיא יעמוד איש מבני יוסף בדברא בלבד ויקרא משיח י"י
ויקבצו אליו אנשים רבים בגליל העליון ויהיה להם מלך...תבל רוב
ישראל בגלותם כי לא יתברר למו כי בא הקץ, ואז יעלה משיח
בן יוסף עם האנשים המלקטים אליו מן הגליל לירושלים...
והיה כי ישב משיח בן יוסף וכל העם אשר עמו בירושלים ושמע
ארמילוס את שמעם והוא בא ועושה כשפים ומדוחים להטעות
בה רבים ויעלה וילחם בירושלים וינצח את משיח בן יוסף ועמו
ויהרוג מהם וישבה מהם ויחלק שללם...ואף יהרג משיח בן יוסף
ותהיה צרה גדולה לישראל...ויאמרו זה האיש אשר אנו מקוים
לו וכבר בא ונהרג ולא נשאר להם עוד ישועה.¹

Hai Gaon:

“...and at that time, a man will arise from among the Children of Joseph...and he will be called Messiah of God. And many people will gather around him in Upper Galilee, and he will be their king...But most of Israel will be in their exile, for it will be clear to them that the end has come. And then Messiah ben Joseph, with the men who rally around him, will go up from Galilee to Jerusalem...And when Messiah ben Joseph and all the people with him will dwell in Jerusalem, Armilus will hear their tidings and will come and make magic and sorcery and lead many astray with them, and he will go up and wage war against Jerusalem and will defeat Messiah ben Joseph and his people, and will kill many of them, and will

¹ Eliezer Ashkenazi, *Sefer Ta'am Z'qenim* (Frankfurt am Main: 1854 – copy in The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York), p. 58.

capture [many] and divide their booty ... And he will slay Messiah ben Joseph and it will be a great calamity for Israel... so that they say: 'This is the man for whom we had hoped; now he came and was killed and no redemption is left for us.'¹

MOSHIACH BEN DAVID:

This beloved title for Moshiach is found everywhere in the writings of the Rabbonim!

סוכה נב א
תנו רבנן משיח בן דוד שעתיד להגלות במהרה בימינו אומר לו
הקב"ה שאל ממני דבר ואתן לך שנאמר אספרה אל חוק וגו'
אני היום ילדתיך שאל ממני ואתנה גוים נחלתך...²
(תהילים ב ז, ח)

Sukkah 52a:

“The rabbis have taught: The Holy One, blessed be He, will say to Messiah ben David, may he be revealed soon in our days! ‘Ask of me anything, and I shall give it to you,’ for it is written, *The Lord said unto me, Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee, ask of Me and I will give thee the nations for thy inheritance*’ (Psalm 2:7-8).³”

OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

מדרש תהלים מזמור כא יב
וקורא למלך המשיח בשמו, שנאמר וזה שמו וקראו ה' צדקנו
(ירמיה כג ו) וירושלים נקרא בשמו, (יג) שנאמר ושם העיר מיום
ה' שמה...⁴

¹ Patai (English translation; see Ashkenazi, Eliezer, *Sefer Ta'am Z'genim*), pp. 168, 169.

² Freedman, *Sukkah 52a*.

³ Patai (English translation), p. 167.

⁴ Buber, p. 173.

Midrash Tehilim 21:12:

“God will call the King Messiah after His own name, for it is said of the King Messiah *This is his name whereby he shall be called: the Lord our righteousness* (**Jeremiah 23:6**). Jerusalem also shall be called after the Lord’s name, for it is said of Jerusalem *The name of the city from that day shall be the Lord...*”¹

Rabbi Joseph Albo:

ה' יוסף אלבו:
ויקרא הכתוב שם המשיח ה' צדקנו (ירמיה כג ה, ו) להיותו
אמצעי אל שנשיג הצדק מה' על ידו ועל כן יקראהו בשם ה',
וכן יקרא ירושלים ה' שמה, לפי שהו מקום שנראה ונגלה שם
כבוד ה' בתמידות יותר מכל המקומות²

Rabbi Joseph Albo:

“In the same way the Bible calls the name of the Messiah, ‘*The Lord our righteousness*’ (**Jeremiah 23:5,6**), because he is the medium through whom we obtain justice from God. For this reason he is called by the name of God. Similarly Jerusalem is called, ‘*The Lord is there.*’ Because it is a place where the glory of the Lord was revealed more constantly than anywhere else.”³

Rav Saadia Gaon:

רב סעדיה גאון:
וארו עם ענני שמיא כבר אנש אתה. זהו משיח צדקנו.⁴

¹ Braude, p. 294.

² Issac Husik, *Sefer Ha'Ikkarim, Book of Principles* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), Vol. 2, p.176.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Rosenberg, p. 67.

Rav Saadia Gaon:

“*And behold with the clouds of heaven, one like a man was coming.*” This is Messiah our righteousness.”¹

YINNON:

Rashi, in commentary on Micah 5:1 saying it is in reference to Moshiach ben David, quotes the last phrase of verse one and brings in Psalm 72:17, saying his name is Yinnon:

רש"י: מיכה ה א
ומוצאתיו מקדם. לפני שמש ינון שמו

Rashi, Micah 5:1:

“And his origin is from old ‘*Before the sun his name is Yinnon*’ (Psalm 72:17)”²

Babylonian Talmud:

סנהדרין דף צח ב
רבי ינאי אמר: ינון שמו, שנאמר (תהלים עב)
יהי שמו לעולם לפני שמש ינון שמו.

Sanhedrin 98b:

“The School of R. Yannai said: His name is Yinnon, for it is written, ‘*His name shall endure forever: e’er the sun was, his name is Yinnon*’ (Psalm 72:17).”³

¹ Ibid.

² A. J. Rosenberg, trans., *Mikraot Gedolot: The Book of the Twelve Prophets; A New Translation* (New York: The Judaica Press, 1988), p. 220.

³ Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein, ed., Sanhedrin 98b, p. 667.

HANINAH:

Haninah is yet another title for Moshiach in the Talmud:

סנהדרין צח ב
דבי רבי חנינה אמר: חנינה שמו, שנאמר (ירמיה טז יג) אשר
לא אתן לכם חנינה.

Sanhedrin 98b:

“The School of Haninah maintained: His name is Haninah, as it is written, *Where I will not give you Haninah (Jeremiah 16:13).*”¹

SIX, SEVEN AND EIGHT OTHER NAMES FOR MOSHIACH!

Rambam speaks of six names of Moshiach found in Isaiah 9:5 which show his “pre-eminence.” He concludes with Psalm 2:7, “Thou art my son...”

רמב"ם, ששה שמות של משיח:
...שלא השגחת למעלת המשיח מה היא, ואיך תהיה עמידתי, ובאיזה
מקום יהיה, ואיזה אות תהיה מיוחדת לו...וקרא לו הב"ה ששה
שמות באמרו כי ילד ילד לנו בן נתן לנו ותהי המשרה על שכמו
ויקרא שמו פלא יועץ אל גבור אבי עד שר שלום.² (ישעיה ט ה)

וקראו יתעלה בששה שמות והוא אמרו כי ילד ילד לנו, ולא מש
מלהפליג בתאריו עד שאמר לו יתעלה בני אתה אני היום ילדתיך,
להודיענו את מעלתו שהיא למעלה מכל בני אנוש.³ (תהילים ב ז)

Rambam, “Letter to Yemen”:

“...You have not considered the pre-eminence of the

¹ Ibid.

² Halkin, p. 87.

³ R. David Kapah, *Egeret Teman* (Jerusalem: Mossad harav Kook, 1972), p. 51.

Messiah, the manner and place of his appearance and the marks whereby he is to be identified...Six appellations were divinely conferred upon him as the following passage indicates: *'For a child is born unto us, and a son is given unto us, and the government is upon his shoulder, and he is called Pele, Yoetz, El, Gibbor, Abiad, Sar Shalom'* (**Isaiah 9:5**).

“And another verse alluding to the Messiah culminates in the following manner: *'Thou art my son, today have I begotten thee'* (**Psalms 2:7**). All these statements demonstrate the pre-eminence of the Messiah.”¹

In the Midrash Mishle, Rav Huna speaks of seven names for Moshiach, also drawn from Isaiah 9:5:

מידרש משלי פרק יט:
א"ר הונא, שבעה שמות נקרא משיח ואילו הן: ינון צדקינו צמח
מנחם דוד שילה אליהו²

Midrash Mishle:

“Rav Huna said: ‘The Messiah is called by seven names and they are Yinnon, Tzidquenu [‘Our Justice’], Zemah [‘Shoot’], Menahem [‘Comforter’], David, Shiloh, and Elijah.’”³

“The Messiah is called by eight names: Yinon, Zemah, Pele [‘Miracle’], Yo’etz [‘Counsellor’], Mashiach [‘Messiah’], El [‘God’], Gibbor [‘Hero’], and Avi ’Ad Shalom [‘Eternal Father of Peace’].”⁴

¹ Halkin, p. xvi.

² Baruch ben Meir and Halevi Vizotski, *Midrash Mishle* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1990), p. 141.

³ *Midrash Mishle* (“*Midrash on Proverbs*”) ed. Solomon Buber (Vilna: 1893), p. 87. (*Midrash Mishle* said to be compiled in the 9th century).

⁴ Patai, p. 22 (see Buber’s note, *Ibid*, p. 87)

(**Note:** Here the Midrash on Proverbs takes the names mentioned in **Isaiah 9:5** and applies them to Moshiach, as does Rambam.)

Midrash Rabbah Deuteronomy likewise makes the above passage, Isaiah 9:5, to be speaking about Moshiach:

מדרש דברים
עד עכשו לי להעמיד מלך המשיח, שכתוב בו: כי ילד יולד-לנו
(ישעיה ט ה).¹

Midrash Rabbah Deuteronomy:

“‘I have yet to raise up the Messiah,’ of whom it is written, ‘*For a child is born to us*’ (**Isaiah 9:5**).”²

Rashi, however, makes Isaiah 9:5 refer to Hezekiah:

רש"י: ישעיה פרק ט ה:
ויקרא שמו הקב"ה שהוא מפליא ענה ואל גבור ואזי עד,
קרא שמו של חזקיהו שר שלום כי שלום ואמת יהיה צימיו:

Rashi, Isaiah 9:5:

“*and...called his name* The Holy One, blessed be He, Who gives wondrous counsel, is a mighty God and everlasting Father, called Hezekiah’s name, ‘*the prince of peace*,’ since peace and truth will be in his days.”³

However, Rashi states that Hezekiah would be disqualified from being Moshiach:

רש"י: ישעיה פרק ט ו

¹ A. A. Halevi, *Devorim Rabbah* (Tel Aviv: Machborot l’Sifrut, 1963), p. 25.

² Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman, Maurice Simon, eds., Dr. J. Rabinowitz, trans., *Midrash Rabbah Deuteronomy* (London: Soncino Press), p. 22.

³ Complete Tanach with Rashi, *Commentary on Isaiah*, CD ROM (Chicago, IL: Davka Corp.).

ואמרו רבותינו זקש הקצ"ה לעשות חזקיהו משיח וסנחריב גוג
ומגוג אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקצ"ה מי שקלץ דלתות
ההיכל ושגרן למלך אשור יעשה משיח מיד סתמו הכתוב.

Rashi, Isaiah 9:6:

“And our Rabbis said: The Holy one, blessed be He, wished to make Hezekiah the Messiah and Sennacherib, Gog and Magog. Said the ministering angels before the Holy One, blessed be He, Should the one who stripped the doors of the Temple and sent them to the king of Assyria, be made a Messiah? Immediately, the Scripture closed it up.”¹

The Babylonian Talmud also disagrees with any interpretation that would make Hezekiah the Moshiach:

סנהדרין צט א
רבי הילל אומר: אין להם משיח לישראל, שכבר אכלוהו בימי
חזקיה. אמר רב יוסף: שרא ליה מריה לרבי הילל! חזקיה אימת
הוה - בבית ראשון, ואילו זכריה קא מתנבי בבית שני ואמר
(זכריה ט ט) גילי מאד בת ציון הריעי בת ירושלים הנה מלכך
יבוא לך צדיק ונושע הוא עני ורכב על חמור ועל עיר בן אתנות.

Sanhedrin 99a:

“R. Hillel said: ‘There shall be no Messiah for Israel, because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah.’ R. Joseph said: ‘May God forgive him [for saying so]. Now when did Hezekiah flourish? During the first Temple.’ Yet Zechariah, prophesying in the days of the second, proclaimed, *‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy king cometh unto thee! He is just, and having*

¹ Ibid.

*salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt
the foal of an ass.*’...**Zechariah 9:9.**”¹

¹ *Soncino Talmud*, Sanhedrin 99a, CD ROM (Chicago, IL: Davka Corp.).

CHAPTER 4

THE ORIGINS OF MOSHIACH

The *pre-existence* of Moshiach is referred to in a number of rabbinic passages:

פסיקתא רבתי לג
אתה מוצא מתחילת ברייתו של עולם נולד מלך המשיח, שעלה
במחשבת עד שלא נברא העולם (נח) כן הוא [אמר] ויצא חוטר מגזע
ישי (ישעיה יא א) אינו אומר (כן) כאן ויצא אלא [ויצא] (כנו)...¹

Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 33:6

“You find that at the very beginning of creation of the world, the king Messiah had already come into being, for he existed in God’s thought even before the world was created. Of his existence Scripture says, *‘And there came forth a shoot of the stock of Jesse’* (**Isaiah 11:1**) it does not say *‘And there shall come forth’* <but *‘And there came forth’*>, implying that the shoot of the stock of Jesse had already come forth.”²

¹ Meir Ish Shalom, *Pesikta Rabbati* (Tel Aviv: New Press, 1880), Piska 33.

² Braude, *Piska* 33:6, p. 641, 642-643.

Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 36

פסיקתא רבתי לו
מהו באורך נראה אור...זה אורו של משיח שנאמר וירא אלהים את
האור כי טוב (בראשית א ד). מלמד שצפה הקדוש ברוך הוא
במשיח ובמעשיו קודם שנברא העולם (וגם) [וגגזו] למשיחו
לדורו תחת כסא הכבוד שלו...¹

Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 36:

“What is meant by ‘*in thy light do we see light?*’...It is the light of the Messiah of which it is said ‘*And God saw the light that it was good*’ (**Genesis 1:4**). This verse proves that the Holy One, blessed be He, contemplated the Messiah and his works before the world was created, and then under His throne of glory put away His Messiah until the time of the generation in which he will appear.”²

Yemenite Midrash (Midrashe Geulah)

מדרש תמני (מדרשי גאולה)
ומשיח בן-דוד עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא להושיבו בישיבה למעלה,
וקוראים לפניו יי' כדרך שקוראים לפני קונו - שנאמר (ירמיה כג ו)
”וזה שמו אשר יקראו: צדקנו!” והמשיח עתיד לישב בישיבה,
וכל-באי-עולם באים ויושבים לפניו לשמע תורה חדשה ומצוות
חדשות וחכמות עמקות שהוא מלמד לישראל.³

Yemenite Midrash:

“In the future, the Holy one, blessed be He, will seat Messiah in the supernal Yeshivah [House of Study], and they will call him ‘Lord,’ just as they call the Creator [Jeremiah 23:6]...”

¹ Shalom, *Piska 36*, p. 41.

² Braude, *Piska 36*, p.671.

³ Yehuda ibn-Shmuel, ed., *Midr'she G'ula* (“*Midrashim of Redemption*”) (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv: Mosad Bialik-Massada, 1954; collection of Midrashim dealing with the Messianic Age and events.), p. 349.

“And the Messiah will sit in the Yeshivah, and all those who walk on earth will come and sit before him to hear a new Tora and new commandments and the deep wisdom which he teaches Israel...”¹

Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE to 50 CE), although not a rabbi, this famous Jewish Greek philosopher wrote a commentary on the Torah. In his commentary on Genesis, he speaks of a man who is called “the rising” [Hebrew *zemach*, i.e. “shoot” or “branch”] (Zechariah 6:12):

Philo of Alexandria:

“I have heard also an oracle from the lips of one of the disciples of Moses, which runs thus: ‘Behold a man whose name is the rising’ (Zechariah 6:12), strangest of titles, surely, if you suppose that a being composed of soul and body is here described. But if you suppose that it is that Incorporeal One, who differs not a whit from the divine image, you will agree that the name of ‘rising’ assigned to him quite truly describes him. For that man is the eldest son, whom the Father of all raised up, and elsewhere calls him His first-born, and indeed the Son thus begotten followed the ways of his Father, and shaped the different kinds, looking to the archetypal patterns which that Father supplied.”²

Moshiach is said to have no father:

בראשית רבה של ר' משה הדרשן:
ומי אתה הר הגדול הר הגדול זה משיח ולמה הוא קורא אותו הר הגדול שהוא גדול מן האבות שנ' הנה ישכיל עבדי מדברי ר' משה הדרשן למדתיה הגואל אשר אקים מכם אין לו אב שנ' הנה איש

¹ Patai (English translation), pp. 256, 257.

² F. H. Colson, trans., *Philo*, in eleven volumes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), p. 45 (in “The Confusion of Tongues, 60-65).

צמח שמו ומתחתיו יצמח וכן הוא אומר ויעל כיונק לפניו וכשורש מארץ ציה [ישעיה נג ב]: אר' ברכיה אמר הב"ה לישראל אתם אמרתם לפני יתומים היינו ואין אב אף גואל שאני עתיד להעמיד מכם אין לו אב שנ' הנה צמח שמו ומתחתיו יצמח וכן אמר ישעיהו ויעל כיונק לפניו...¹

Genesis Rabbah of Rabbi Moshe haDarshan:

“*Who art thou, O great mountain?*” (**Zechariah 4:7**).

The great mountain means Messiah, and why does he speak of him thus? Because he is greater than the patriarchs, as it is said, ‘Behold my servant shall prosper’ [Isaiah 52:13]. I have learnt it from the words of R. Moshe haDarshan: The redeemer whom I shall raise up from among you will have no father, as it is written, ‘Behold the man whose name is Zemah [branch], and he shall branch up out of his place’ (**Zechariah 6:12**); and so Isaiah says, ‘And he came up like a sucker,’ [Isaiah 53:2] etc.

Says R. Berhyah, The Holy One said to Israel, You have spoken before me, saying, ‘We are orphans and have no father’ (**Lamentations 5:3**): the redeemer whom I shall raise up out of your midst will have no father also, as it is said, ‘Behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall branch up out of his place’ (**Zechariah 6:12**); and similarly by Isaiah, ‘And he came up as sucker before him.’” [Isaiah 53:2]²

Rashi, in his commentary on Micah 5:1, states that Messiah, son of David, will emanate from Bethlehem:

רש"י: מיכה פרק ה א
 ואתה בית לחם אפרתה. שילא דוד נמשך שנאמר (שמואל א יז)
 בן עבדך ישי בית הלחמי וזית לחם קרויב אפרת שנאמר (בראשית
 מח) זדךך אפרת היא זית לחם: צעיר להיות באלפי יהודה. ראוי

¹ A. D. Neubauer, *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters, Texts from printed books and MSS* (Oxford and London: James Parker and Co.: 1876), p. 83.

² Driver and Neubauer (English translation), p. 33.

היית להיות לעיר צמשפחות יהודה מפני פסולת רות המואביה
שצן: ממך לי יצא. משיח בן דוד וכח"ל (תהלים קיח) אבן מאסו
הבונים: ומוצאותיו מקדם. לפני שמש יוון שמו (שם):

Rashi, Micah 5:1:

*“And you, Bethlehem Ephrath – whence David emanated, as it is stated (I Samuel 17:58): ‘The son of your bondsmen, Jesse the Bethlehemite.’ And Bethlehem called Ephrath, as it is said (Genesis 48:7): ‘On the road to Ephrath, that is Bethlehem.’ You should have been the lowest of the clans of Judah – You should have been the lowest of the clans of Judah because of the stigma of Ruth the Moabitess in you. from you shall emerge to Me – the Messiah, son of David, and so Scripture says (Psalm 118:22): ‘The stone the builders rejected became a cornerstone.’ And his origin is from old – ‘Before the sun his name is Yinnon’ (Psalm 72:17).”*¹

(Note: Rashi quotes Psalm 118:22 above, making Moshiach *“The stone the builders rejected.”*)

Furthermore, Rashi interprets the “fortress stone” of Isaiah 28:16 (also called a “precious cornerstone”) as King Moshiach:

רש"י: ישעיה פרק כח טז
הנני יסד...הנני הוא אשר יסד כזר: צליון אבן כזר נגזרה
הגזרה לפני והעמדתי מלך משיח שיהא בציון לאבן בוחן ל' מבצר
חוזק כמו (לקמן לב) עופל ובוהן...

Rashi:

“Isaiah 28:16 ‘Behold, I have laid a foundation...’ Behold I am He Who has already laid [a stone in Zion. Already] a decree as been decreed before Me, and I have set up King Messiah, who shall be in Zion as

¹ Complete Tanach with Rashi, Commentary on Micah and Isaiah, CD ROM. Chicago, IL: Davka Corp.).

*an 'ehven bohan', a fortress stone, an expression of a fortress and strength..."*¹

**Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer also declares that Moshiach will
"come forth" from Bethlehem:**

פרקי דרבי אליעזר, פרק שלישי:
עד שלא נברא העולם, היה הקדוש-ברוך-הוא ושמו הגדול בלבד... ועלה במחשבה לברא את העולם... שבעה דברים נבראו עד שלא נברא העולם, ואלו הן, תורה, וגיהנום וגן עדן, וכסא הכבוד ובית המקדש, ותשובה, ושמו של משיח... כסא הכבוד מנין. שנאמר, נכון כסאך מאז (תהלים צג ב). מאז, עד שלא נברא העולם... שמו של משיח מנין. שנאמר, לפני שמש ינון שמו (שם עב יז). וכתוב אחת אומר, ואתה בית לחם אפרתה צעיר להיות באלפי יהודה ממך לי יצא להיות מושל בישראל ומוצאותיו מקדם (מיכה ה א) מקדם, עד שלא נברא העולם.²

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chapter 3:

“Before the world was created, the Holy One, blessed be He, with His Name alone existed, and the thought arose in Him to create the world... Seven things were created before the world was created. They are: The Torah, Gehinnom, the Garden of Eden, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, Repentance, and the name of the Messiah. Whence do we know this with reference to the Throne of Glory? *‘Thy throne is established of old.’ (Psalm 93:2).* ‘Of old,’ whilst as yet the world had not been created... Whence do we know this of the Messiah (was premundane)? Because it is said *‘His name will endure forever; before the sun Yinnon was his name’ (Psalm 72:17).* ‘Yinnon,’ before the world was created. Another verse says *‘But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art to be least among the thousands of Judah, from thee shall he come forth unto me who is to be ruler over Israel; whose ancestry belongs to the past, even to*

¹ Ibid.

² *Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer* (Jerusalem: Eshkol Press, 1973) Chapter 3.

the days of old’ (**Micah 5:1**). ‘*The past,*’ whilst as yet the world had not been created.”¹

Talmud Yerushalmi similarly states:

תלמוד ירושלמי ברכות יז ב
דהא יליד מלכא משיח...מן הן הוא...מן בירת מלכא דבית
לחם יהודה.²

Talmud Yerushalmi, Berakhot 17b:

“...king Messiah is born’...‘From whence is he?’
...‘From the **royal palace** of **Bethlehem Judah.**”³

¹ Gerald Friedlander, trans. and annotator, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (New York: Hermon Press, 1965), pp. 9–11.

² Yehiel Barlev, *Talmud Yerushalmi* (Petach Tikvah, 2000) Zeraim, Berakhot 17b, p. 34.

³ *Ibid.* (English translation).

CHAPTER 5

MOSHIACH, TO BE A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES

Ramban (Nachmanides), speaking of Moshiach (ben David), quotes Isaiah 53:10, and then, going on to verse 11, speaks of the “labor” Moshiach “saw” and tells us that Moshiach “will teach all the gentiles to ‘understand’ and ‘know’ the Lord”:

רמב"ן:
וחפץ ה' בידו יצלח (ישעיה נג י), כי הוא ישלים הגאולה אשר
ה' חפץ בה. וילמד לכל עמים להשכיל ולדעת את ה'. וזה וחפץ ה',
כמו שנאמר: באלה חפצתי נאום ה' (ירמיה ט כג). מעמל נפשו
יראה ישבע (פסוק יא), יאמר כי בעבור העמל שראה בעצמו יושבע
קלון מכבוד.... [חבקוק ב טז]¹

Ramban:

“And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand”
[Isaiah 53:10]; because he will accomplish the

¹ Shaval, p. 90.

Redemption in which the Lord finds pleasure, and will teach all the Gentiles to *'understand and know'* the Lord: this is what is meant by the *'pleasure of the Lord,'* as it is written, *'In these is my pleasure'* (**Jeremiah 9:23** [24 Eng.]). Because of the *'labor' which he 'saw'* (experienced) [Isaiah 53:11] in himself, and because he was satisfied with *'shame instead of glory'* (**Habakkuk 2:16**).”¹

Abrabanel asserts that the Gentiles will seek Moshiach the son of David:

אברבנאל:

משיח בן דוד...ישעיהו אמר הן עבדי אתמוך בו בחירי רצתה נפשי נתתי רוחי עליו [מב א] ובמקום אחר קראו חוטר מגזע ישי ואמר נחה עליו רוח ה' וגומר אליו גויים ידרושו [ישעיה טי ט]²

Abrabanel:

“...Messiah the son of David...Isaiah... describes him as God's *'chosen one, in whom his soul delights'* (**42:1**), and as the *'rod of the stump'* of Jesse, upon whom *'the spirit of the Lord rests'* (**11:2**), and to whom *'the Gentiles will seek'* (**11:10**)”³

Rabbi Levi ben Gershom (“Gersonides” or “Ralbag”) says that Moshiach will “draw all nations to the worship of God”:

רלב"ג:

הוא מלך המשיח כמו שאמרו במדרש הנה ישכיל עבדי (ישעיה נב ג), שכבר יהיה יותר גדול ממשה ויתבאר שנפלאותיו גם כן תהיינה למעלה מנפלאות משה כי משה משך ישראל לבד לעבודת השם ית' בנפלאות שחדש והוא ימשוך כל האומות לעבודת השם ית' באמרו אז אהפוך אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרוא כלם בשם יי' וזה אמנם

¹ Driver and Neubauer (English translation), p. 83.

² Abrabanel, Don Yitzak, *Perush al Nevi'im Adhronim* (Tel Aviv: Alisha Press, 1955), Yeshiah Nun Bet, רמג, p. 243.

³ Driver and Neubauer (English translation), p. 163.

יהיה באמצעות מופת נפלא יראה בקצות הארץ לכל האומות והוא תחיית המתים.¹

“...the Messiah is such a prophet, as it is stated in the Midrash on the verse, *Behold my servant shall prosper*, [Isaiah 52:13] etc., that he will be ‘greater than Moses,’ which is explained to mean that his miracles will be more wonderful than those of Moses; Moses, by the miracles which he wrought, drew but a single nation to the worship of God, but the Messiah will draw all nations to the worship of God, as it is written (**Zephaniah 3:9**), ‘Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord,’ etc. And this will be effected by means of a marvelous sign, to be seen by all nations even to the ends of the earth, viz. the resurrection of the dead.”²

The Midrash Tehilim (Psalms) similarly states that the Goyim (nations) will “seek the king Moshiach”:

מדרש תהלים מזמר כא א
זהו שאמר הכתיב והיה ביום ההוא שרש ישי אשר עומד לנו
עמים אליו גוים ידרשו (ישעיה יא י) (א) זה משיח בן דוד
הנחבא עד עת קץ.³

Midrash Tehilim:

*“In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the peoples; unto him shall the nations seek (Isaiah 11:10) that is, seek the king Messiah, David’s son, who will remain hidden until the time of redemption.”*⁴

¹ Neubauer (from Levi ben Gershom’s *Commentary on the Pentateuch, Perushei haTorah*, Psalm 34:10), p. 402.

² Driver and Neubauer (English translation), p. 568.

³ Buber, p. 175.

⁴ Rabbi William G. Braude, trans., *The Midrash on the Psalms* (New Haven: Yale, 1959), Yale Judaica Series, Volume XIII, Leon Nemoj, ed., Book One, Psalm 21:1, 3.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, although a later rabbi (born 1892), sounds an interesting note in his *Michtav Eliyahu* about the acceptance of Moshiach by the gentiles:

מכתב אליהו:
עברו עברו בשערים פנו דרך העם סלו סלו המסלה סקלו מאבן
הרימו נס על העמים (ישעיה סב י). 'הנה ה' השמיע אל קצה
הארץ אמרו לבת ציון הנה ישעך בא...' (שם שם יא).

חידוש גדול חידוש לנו התרגום בזה, שיכול להיות אמנם שמשיח
עתגלה לישראל תחילה והם יודיעו לאומות העולם, או אדרבא
שיתגלה לאומות העולם והם יספרו לישראל.¹

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler:

“Go through go through the gates; clear the way for the
peoples; pave, pave the road; clear it of stones; raise a
banner over the peoples. Behold, Hashem has announced to
the ends of the earth; Say to the daughter of Zion,
“Behold, your savior has come!” (Isaiah 62:10,11).

This is our great discovery which means that it could
be, perhaps, that Moshiach will be revealed to Israel
first and they will tell to the nations of the world or
he will be revealed to the nations of the world and
they will tell to Israel.”²

¹ Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, *Michtav Eliyahu* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1983), p. 301.

² Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

CHEVLEY (SUFFERINGS OF) MOSHIACH

The writings of the Rabbonim are replete with commentary on the “*suffering of Moshiach.*” Where did this idea come from? Let us consider some of the following Rabbinic passages: Midrash Konen states that Moshiach son of David is bearing wounds and suffering for Israel (as is recorded in Isaiah 53:5):

מדרש קונען: משיח בן דוד שאוהב את ירושלים. אליהו ז"ל תופסו בראשו ומניחו בחיקו ומחזיקו ואומר לו סבול יסורין ודין מרד שמיסרדך על חטאת ישראל וכן כתיב והוא מחולל מפשעינו מדוכא מעוונותינו עד זמן שיבא הקץ (ישעיה נג ה).¹

Midrash Konen:

“...Messiah, son of David who loveth Jerusalem.
Elijah takes him by his head, lays him down in his
bosom, holds him, and saying ‘Bear thou the

¹ Jellinek, *Midrash Konen*, p. 29.

sufferings and wounds wherewith the Almighty doth chastise thee for Israel's sin;' and so it is written, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities,' [Isaiah 53:5] until the time when the end should come."¹

The Yalkut Shimoni speaks of Moshiach's sufferings and that he gladly took them upon himself in order to bear "all the sins of our sons," drawing imagery from Psalm 22:

ילקוט שמעוני פרשת ישע
הללו שגנוזים אצלך עונותיהם עתידים להכניסך בעול ברזל ועושים
אותך כעגל הזה שכהו עיניו ומשנקין את רוחך בעול ובעונותיהם
של אלו עתיד לשונך להדבק בחכך (תהלים כב טז) רצונך בכך, אמר
משיח לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע שמא אותו צער שנות רבות הם, א"ל הקב"ה
חיך וחיי ראשך שבו עגורתי עליך אם נפשך עצבה אני טוררן,
מעכשיו, אמר לפניו רבש"ע בגילת לבי ובשימחת לבי אני מקבל עלי
על מנת שלא יאבד אחד מישראל, ולא חיים בלבד יושעו בימי אלא
אף אותם שגנוזים בעפר, ולא מתים בלבד יושעו בימי אלא אף
אותם מתים שמתו מימות אדם הראשון עד עכשיו, ולא אלו בלבד
אלא אף נפלים יושעו בימי ולא נפלים בלבד אלא אף למי שעלתה
על דעתך להבראות ולא נבראו, בכך אני רוצה, בכך אני מקבל
עלי על מנת שלא יאבד אחד מישראל, ולא חיים בלבד יושעו בימי
אלא אף אותם שגנוזים בעפר, ולא מתים בלבד יושעו בימי אלא אף
אותם מתים שמתו מימות אדם הראשון עד עכשו, ולא אלו בלבד אלא
אף נפלים יושעו בימי, ולא נפלים בלבד יושעו אבימי אלא אף אותם
מתים שמתו מימות אדם הראשון עד עכשו, ולא אלו בלבד אלא אף
נפלים יושעו בימי, ולא נפלים בלבד אלא אף למי שעלתה על דעתך
להראות ולא נבראו, בכך אני רוצה, בכך אני מקבל... אפרים משיח
צדקנו אע"פ שאנו אבותיך אתה טוב ממנו שסבלת עונות בנינו...²

Yalkut Shimoni, Parasha Yeshiah:

“The sins of those who are hidden with Thee will cause Thee to be put under an iron yoke, and they will do with Thee as with this calf, whose eyes are covered, and they will choke Thy spirit under the

¹ Driver and Neubauer (English translation), Vol. II, p. 394.

² Dimin Frankfurter, *Yalkut Shimoni* (New York: Pardes, n.d.), Parasha Yeshiah, p. 808.

yoke, and on account of their sins Thy tongue shall cleave to Thy mouth [Psalm 22:16]. On which the Messiah inquires whether these troubles are to last for many years, and the Holy One replies that He has decreed a week, but if His soul were in sorrow, He would immediately dispel these sorrows. On this the Messiah says: Lord of the world, with gladness and joy of heart I take it upon Me, on condition that not one in Israel should perish, and not only those alone should be saved who are in My days, but those who are hid in the dust; and that not only the dead should be saved who are in My days, but also those who have died from the days of the first Adam until now; and not only those, but also those who have come into Thy knowledge to create them, but have not yet been created. Thus I agree and thus I take all upon Me...Ephraim, the Messiah, our righteousness, though we are Thy Fathers, yet Thou art better than we, because Thou hast borne all the sins of our sons..."¹

Ramban (Nachmanides), paints a remarkable picture of Moshiach and the reason for his sufferings using Isaiah 52:14 as his starting point and progressing through chapter 53, including saying that Moshiach would be mocked when he first arrived:

ר' משה בן נחמן:
 ואמר הכתוב במשיח: כאשר שממו עליך (פסוק יד לפנינו),
 להלעיג בך בתחלת בואך, ואמר: האיש הנבזה העני ורוכב על
 חמור [זכריה ט ט], איך ינצח כל מלכי העולם, שכולם החזיקו
 בישראל ואיך יוציאם מידם, וכן היה פרעה עושה במשה, מלעיג
 עליו כמו שנאמר: הן בני ישראל לא שמעו אלי ואיך ישמעני
 פרעה (שמות ו יב). עליו יקפצו מלכים פיהם (פסוק טו), שיסגרו
 פיהם ואפילו בחדרי משככם, יהיו יראים מלדבר עליו. ויאמרו
 איש אל רעהו : גם במדעך מלך אל תקלל (קהלת י כ).

¹ *Yalkut Shimoni*, Parasha Yeshiah (English translation here of unknown origin). A similar statement is found in *Pesikta Rabbati*; see addendum, p. 93.

נג א, ב אז האמין לשמועתם, ואמרו כאשר באה שמועת משיח בעמים, מי בהם שיאמין בה, וזרוע ה' הוא מולך לימין הגואל, כמו שהולך לימין משה זרוע תפארתו (להלן סג יב), על מי נגלתה (פרק נג פסוק א) שיאמין בהם בזה, כי היה בתחילה כאילן קטן עולה מארץ ציה שלא יגדל לתת ענף ולשאת פרי. והוא נבזה (פסוק ג לפנינו), שאין לו חיל ועם, אבל עני ורכב על חמור, כאשר היה הגואל הראשון מרע"ה בבואו למצרים ואשתו ובניו על חמור. איש מכאובות, מצטער על עונות בני ישראל שגורמין איחור, ומונעים אותו מהיות מלך על ישראל.

וידוע חלי, כי תמיד הוא בצער, כי הכאב והחולי אמר על הצער ברוב החשק, כמו שנאמר: ויצר לאמנון להתחלות בעבור תמר אחותו (שמואל-ב יג ב), וכך: אין חולה מכם עלי (שמואל-א כב ח), או שיחלש ממש מן הצער כמו שנוהג בבני אדם.

אכן חלינו הוא נשא (פסוק ד), כי חולה ומצטער על פשעינו שהיינו אנחנו ראויים להיות חולים ומצטערים עליהם, והמכאובות שהיינו אנחנו ראויים להיות כאובים עליהם, הוא רוב חזקם כי הוא המצטער עליהם. ואנחנו חשבנוהו בראותינו אותו דל וחלש כי הוא מוכה אלקים ומעונה. ובחבורתו נרפא לנו (ישעיה נג ה), כי החבורה שהוא מצטער ומתגורר עליו מרפא אותנו, כי ה' יסלח לנו בזכותו ונתרפא מפשעים ועוונות אבותינו... וכל הלשונות האלו רבים מענין הגאולה, אנוש לשברך נחלה מכתך (ירמיה ל יב).¹

Ramban:

“... The text continues, referring still to the Messiah, ‘As many were astonished at thee’ [Isaiah 52:14]. Their astonishment was shown by mocking him when he first arrived, and by asking how one ‘despised’ ‘meek and riding upon an ass’ (**Zechariah 9:9**), could conquer all the kings of the world who had laid hold upon Israel, and rescue him from their hand: so acted Pharaoh towards Moses, when he mocked him, as he says (**Exodus 6:12**), ‘How will Pharaoh listen to

¹ Shaval, pp. 87-88.

me?'... *The kings will close their mouths* [Isaiah 53:15], and even in the chamber of their heart (**Ezekiel 8:12**) will be afraid to speak of him, saying each to his neighbor, Even in thy thought curse not a king (**Qohelet 10:20**).

53:1 When the report of the Messiah comes among the people, *who* is there among them that will *believe it*? The *arm* is that which he will cause to journey at the right hand of the Redeemer, just as it is said that he 'caused the arm of his majesty to journey at the right hand of Moses' (**Isaiah 63:12**). *Upon whom* has this arm been revealed so that he might believe in him?

53:2 For at the beginning he was *like a small tree* springing up *out of the dry earth*, which never grows great enough to put forth boughs and to bear fruit; he was *despised* [Isaiah 53:3], for he had no army and no people, but was '*meek and riding upon as ass,*' like the first redeemer Moses, our master, when he entered into Egypt with his wife and children upon an ass (**Exodus 4:20**).

53:3 He was *pained* for the iniquities of Israel, which occasion his tarrying, and hold him back from becoming king over his people; *and known to sickness חולי* , because a man who is sick is continually distressed with pain. is here used of the distress produced by excessive love, as in **I Samuel 22:8**, **II Samuel 13:2**; or it may mean, perhaps, that he will really, as sometimes the case with men, be made sick by his distress.

53:4 *Yet he carried our sicknesses*, being himself sick and distressed for the transgressions which should have caused sickness and distress in us, and bearing the pains which we ought to have experienced. *But we*, when we saw him weakened and prostrate, *thought* that he was *stricken, smitten of God...and by his stripes*

we were healed [Isaiah 53:5] – because the stripes by which he was vexed and distressed will heal us: God will pardon us for his righteousness and we shall be healed from our own transgressions and from the iniquities of our fathers....The metaphor of *healing* is often used with reference to redemption, cf. **Jeremiah 30:13.**¹

The same thought in Ramban's commentary above (on Isaiah 53:5) and that of R. Naphthali ben Asher Altschuler is reflected in this Musaf (additional) prayer authored by Rabbi Eleazar ha-Qalir, 9th century (or perhaps as early as the 6th century) for the Day of Atonement:

פנה מנו משיח צדקנו. פלצנו ואין מי לצדקנו: עוונותינו ועול פשעינו.
עומם והוא מחולל מפשעינו [ישעיה נג ה] סובל על שכם חטאתינו.
סליחה מצא לעוונותינו: נרפא לנו בחבורתנו. נצח בריה חדשה עת
לבראתנו.

Our righteous anointed is departed from us: horror hath seized us, and we have none to justify us. He hath borne the yoke of our iniquities, and our transgression, and is wounded because of our transgression [Isaiah 53:5]. He beareth our sins on his shoulder, that he may find pardon for our iniquities. We shall be healed by his wound, at the time that the Eternal will create him (the Messiah) as a new creature.²

¹ Driver and Neubauer (English translation), pp. 80-82.

² Philips, A. Th., *Machzor L'Yom Kippur Im Targum Anglit; Prayer Book for the Day of Atonement* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1913), p. 239.

Rabbi Naphtali ben Asher Altschuler also sees Moshiach suffering as an atonement for all of Israel, but adds that we would consider him “hated by God”:

ר' נפתלי בן אשר אלטשולר:
מיוסר היה ביסורים להיות כל ישראל מתכפרין ביסוריו כמו אצל מיכה הנביא שאותו דם שיצא ממנו היתה כפרה על כל ישראל. חולי שהיה ראוי לבא עלינו הוא סובל ואמר זה כאשר ימות משיח בן יוסף בין השערים ויהיה פלא בעיני הבריות למה יהיה עונשו כל כך מה חטאתו ומה פשעו אלא סובל הוא יסורין של ישראל וזהו מכה אלהים [ישעיה נג ד] וי"א שאמ' זה על המשח שהוא עכשיו מוכה ביסורין בעולם הבא כדאיתא בגמרא וסובל יסורין של ישראל. ואנחנו חשבנוהו אנו היו סבורין שהוא שנאו למקום וישראל אומרים זה: והוא לא היה כן אלא מחולל היה מפשענו ומדוכא בעונותינו. מסור שלומינו עליו [ישעיה נג ה] באו עליו יסורי השלום שיהיה א'ח'כ לנו כי הוא היה מיוסר כדי שיהיה שלום עלינו:¹

Rabbi Naphtali ben Asher Altschuler:

“...he suffered in order that by his sufferings atonement might be made for the whole of Israel, as it is said of the prophet Micah, that the blood issuing from him made atonement for all Israel. The sickness which ought to have fallen upon us was borne by him: the prophet means to say, When Messiah son of Joseph shall die between the gates, and be a marvel in the eyes of creation, why must the penalty he bears be so severe? What is his sin, and what his transgression, except that he will bear the chastisements of Israel, according to the words *smitten of God?* [Isaiah 53:4] Others consider that the passage speaks of the Messiah who is smitten *now* with the pains of the world to come (as it stands in the *Gemara*), and endures so the sufferings of Israel. *And yet we* – it is Israel who are speaking – *thought* that he had been hated of God. But it was not so: *he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our*

¹ Neubauer, pp. 282-283.

iniquities, and the chastisement which was afterwards to secure our peace was upon him." [Isaiah 53:5] ¹

Ramban says that when Moshiach is faced with the revilings of his oppressors, he will "give no answer, but keep silent and cease not to entreat for Israel":

רמב"ן:
נגש והוא נענה (פסוק ז), כי בבואו מתחלה עני ורוכב על חמור, ובאו עליו כל נוגשי עיר ועיר ושוטריו ויענו אותו בחרופין וגדופין, כי ירדפו אותו ואת אלקים אשר בא בשמו, כענין מרע"ה שאמר לו פרעה: לא ידעתני את ה' (שמות ה ב), והוא לא ענה אותו ולא אמר לו, אלקי השמים וארץ אשר ישמידך מהר, אבל שתק. וכן משיח לא יענה, וישתוק ולא יחדל מלדרוש לישראל...²

Ramban:

"...He was oppressed and he was afflicted [Isaiah 53:7]: for when he first comes, 'meek and riding upon an ass,' the oppressors and officers of every city will come to him, and afflict him with revilings and insults, reproaching both him and the God in whose name he appears, like Moses our master, who, when Pharaoh said, I know not the Lord, answered him not, neither said, The God of heaven and earth who will destroy thee quickly, etc., but kept silence. So will the Messiah give no answer, but keep silent, and cease not to entreat for Israel..."³

The Midrash Rabbah Ruth draws upon the familiar scene of Ruth, sitting at a table of food with Boaz and his reapers (Ruth 2:14) and applies it to Moshiach. Moshiach is seen here as approaching to a royal state, but suffering instead. After a time, however, he will be restored

¹ Driver and Neubauer, (English translation), p 321.

² Shaval, p. 89.

³ Driver and Neubauer (English translation), p. 82.

to his throne and destroy Israel's enemies. (The time element required for Moshiach to move from his sufferings to his sovereignty and destroying Israel's enemies is not given. The Midrash simply states: "for a time"):

מדרש רבה רות פרק ה
דבר אחר מדבר במלך המשיח 'גשי הלם' קרובי למלכות 'ואכלת מן
הלחם' זה לחמה של מלכות 'וטבלת פתך בחומץ אלו היסורין
שנאמר (ישעיה נג ה) 'והוא מחלל מפשענו' ותשב מצד הקצרים'
שעתידה מלכותו לצוד ממנו לשעה שנאמר (זכריה יד ב) 'ואספתי
את כל הגוים אל ירושלים למלחמה ונלכדה העיר' 'ויצבט לה קלי'
שהיא עתידה לחזר לו שנאמר (ישעיה יא ד) והכה ארץ בשבט פיו...¹

Midrash Rabbah Ruth:

"The fifth interpretation makes it refer to the Messiah. *come hither*: approach to a royal state. *and eat of the bread* refers to the bread of royalty; *and dip thy morsel in vinegar* refers to his sufferings, as it is said 'But he was wounded because of our transgressions' (**Isaiah 53:5**). *and she sat beside the reapers*, for he will be deprived of his sovereignty for a time, as it is said, 'For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken' (**Zechariah 14:2**). *and they reached her parched corn*, means that he will be restored to his throne, as it is said, *and he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth* (**Isaiah 11:4**)."²

The Midrash on Exodus, when addressing the question of what to do about forgiveness of sins when Israel will have no Temple and thus no sacrifice, states:

מדרש רבה שמות, פרשה תרומה לד
אמר משה לפני הקב"ה והלא עתידים הם שלא יהיה להם לא משכן
ולא מקדש ומה תהא עליהם אמר הקב"ה: אני נוטל מהם צדיק אחד

¹ *Midrash Rabbah Ruth* (Jerusalem: Institute of the Midrash, 1984), parasha 5.

² Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds.; Rabbi Dr. L.

Rabinowitz, trans., *Midrash Rabbah Ruth* (London: Soncino Press), Volume 6, pp. 61, 64.

וממשכנו בעדם ומכפר אני עליהם על כל עונותיהם...¹

Midrash Rabbah Exodus, Parashah Terumah, lamed dalet:

“Moses said to God: ‘Will not a time come when Israel shall have neither Tabernacle nor Temple? What will happen with them then?’ The divine reply was: ‘I will then take one of their righteous men and retain him as a pledge on their behalf, in order that I may pardon all their sins.’”²

A righteous one suffering on behalf of the *whole world* is seen in the Zohar:

זוהר, במדבר, פנחס ריח
...בני עלמא אינון שייפין דא עם דא. בשעתא דבעי קב"ה
למיהב אסוותא לעלמא אלקי לחד צדיקא בינייהו ובניניה יחיב
אסוותא לכלא. מנ'ל'ן דכתיב (ישעיה נג ה) והוא מחולל מפשעינו מדכא
מעונותינו ובחבורתו נרפא לנו...³

Zohar, Numbers, Pinchus 218a:

“The children of the world are members one of another. When the Holy One desires to give healing to the world, he smites one just man amongst them, and for his sake heals all the rest. Whence do we learn this? From the saying (**Isaiah 53:5**), ‘*He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities...*’”⁴

¹ Moshe Ariyeh Mirkin, *Midrash Rabbah Exodus* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh Publishing House, 1960), p. 101.

² Rabbi Dr. S. M. Ederman, ed., *Midrash Rabbah Exodus* (New York, London: Soncino Press, 1983), Parashah Terumah, lamed dalet, p. 432.

³ Moshe Margoliot, *Sefer Zohar* (Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1956), B'midbar, Pinchus 218a, p. 436.

⁴ Driver and Neubauer, *Zohar*, Numbers, Pinchus 218a (English translation), p. 15.

The Zohar states that once it was the rituals and sacrifices that removed the diseases from the world; now it is Moshiach:

זוהר, שמות, ויקהל ריב
הוּו ישראל בארעא קדישא באינן פולחנין וקרבנין דהוּו עבדי הוּו
מסלקין כל אינן מרעין ויסורין מעלמא. השתא משיח מסלק
לון מבני עלמא...¹

Zohar, Exodus, Vayaqhel 212a :

“As long as Israel dwelt in the Holy Land, the rituals and the Sacrifices they performed [in the Temple] removed all those diseases from the world; now the Messiah removes them from the children of the world.”²

The Yalkut Hadash affirms that while Israel was in the Land, they freed themselves from punishments by means of offerings, but now Moshiach frees us from them:

ילקוט חדש נט נשמות
כשהיו ישראל בארצם היו מסלקין היסורין וכל מרעין בישין על ידי
הקרבנות אבל השתא משיח מסלק להון דכתיב והוא מחולל
מפשענו (ישעיה נג ה)³

Yalkut Hadash, nun tet, nishmot:

“... While Israel were in their own land they freed themselves from such sicknesses and other punishments by means of offerings, but now the Messiah frees them from them, as it is written, ‘*He was wounded for our transgressions...*’ (Isaiah 53:5)”⁴

¹ Moshe Margoliot, Shemot, Vayaqhel 212, p. 421.

² Patai (English translation), *Zohar* (Exodus) 212a, p. 116.

³ Israel ben Benjamin of Belzec, *Yalkut Hadash* (Lublin: Kalonimus Kalman, 1647 or 1648), photocopied, Brooklyn, NY, Renaissance Hebrew, 1994.

⁴ Driver and Neubauer (English translation; from the later Yalkut, styled Souls), p. 396.

Midrash Aseret Memrot informs us that Moshiach will make his soul a “corban asham” according as it is written in Isaiah 53:10:

מידרש עשרת מאמרות
הנה משיח לכפרת שניהם [אדם ודוד] ישים אשם נפשו (ישעיה נג ו) כדכתיב גביה להדיא בפרשת הנה ישכיל עבדי (ישעיה נב יג):¹

Midrash Aseret Memrot:

“The Messiah, in order to atone for them both [for Adam and David] will *make his soul a trespass offering*, (Isaiah 53:10) as it is written next to this Parashah ‘Behold my servant.’ (Isaiah 52:13)”²

Note: in this Midrash above, the word used for “*trespass offering*” that Moshiach would make of his soul, is the same word in the Hebrew (“*asham*”) used over and over in Leviticus when the *cohen* would offer a *corban asham* on the *mizbeach* (altar).

The famous second century Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai sees Moshiach in a remarkable light:

מלות ר' שמון בן יוחאי על די אליהו ד'ידאס:
והוא מחולל מפשעינו מדוכא מעונותינו (ישעיה נג ה). והכוונה שכמו שהמשיח סובל העונות שלנו עושים לו שיהא מדוכא אם כן מי שירצה שהמשיח לא ידוכה מעונותינו יסבול וידכה הוא בעצמו.³

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai:

“The meaning of the words ‘*bruised for our iniquities*’ [Isaiah 53:5] is, that since the Messiah bears our iniquities, which produce the effect of his being bruised, it follows that whoso will not admit that the

¹ Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano, with commentary by Megini Shlomo and Yoel Moshe, *Sefer Aseret Memrot* (Jerusalem: Hamad Press Ltd., 1999), part 2, chapter 7, under דין חקור, page 58.

² Driver (English translation), p. 394.

³ Neubauer, p. 331.

Messiah thus suffers for our iniquities, must endure and suffer them for them himself.”¹

In the Palestinian Targum, a foreshadowing of the idea of a righteous one suffering in behalf of the whole nation is seen in the Akedah, the binding of Isaac:

תרגם פלשתיני (בראשית כב יד)
...ופלה אברהם וצלי בשם ממריה דיי ואמר בבעו ברחמן מן קדמך...
דאמרת לי למקרבא ית יצחק... בשעת עקתא תהווי מדכר עקדתיה
דיצחק אבוהון ושמע בקל צלותהון ועני יתהון ומשיב יתהון מן כל
עקא... דעתידין דריא דיקומון מבתרה למיהוי אמרין בטור מקדשא
דיי דקרב אברהם ית יצחק ברה ובטורא הדין אתגליית עלוי איקר
שכינתיה דיי:²

Palestinian Targum, Genesis 22:14:

“And Abraham worshiped and prayed in the name of the Memra of the Lord and said...I beseech by the mercy that is before you O Lord...you said to me to offer my son, Isaac...And now when his sons are in the hour of distress you shall remember the binding of their father, Isaac and listen to the voice of their supplication, and answer and deliver them from all of their distress, so that the generations to arise after him may say: On the mountain of the sanctuary of the Lord, Abraham sacrificed his son Isaac, and on this mountain the glory of the Shekinah of the Lord was revealed to him.”³

¹ Driver (English translation), see Introduction, p. xl (words of Shimon ben Yochai as given by R. Elijah de Vidas, 16th century Kabbalist of Safed and pupil of Rabbi Moses Cordovero of Spain).

² Alejandro Diez Macho, *Neophti 1, Targum Palestinense* (Madrid, Barcelona: Consejo Superior De Investigaciones Cientificas, 1968), Tomo 1, *Genesis, Targum on Genesis 22:14*, p. 129.

³ Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis* (A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1986), *Targum on Genesis 22:14* (English translation), pp. 118, 119.

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba, (a third century Palestinian authority), quoted in Midrash Rabbah Leviticus, echoes the above idea in the Palestinian Targum, saying that the death of the righteous effects atonement:

מדרש ויקרא רבבה פרשה כ יב
אמר ר' חיה בר אבא: באחד בניסן מתו בניו של אהרון, ולמה מזכיר
מיתתן ביום הכפורים, אלא מלמד שכשם שיום הכפורים מכפר, כך
מיתתן של צדיקים מכפרת. ומנין שיום הכפורים מכפר, שנאמר:
(ויקרא טז ל) 'כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם.' ומנין
שמיתתן של צדיקים מכפרת, דכתיב: (ש"ב כא יד) 'ויקברו את עצמות
שאוּל', וכתוב: (שם שם, שם) 'ויעתר אלהים לארץ אחרי כן.'¹

Midrash Leviticus Rabbah, 20:12:

“R. Hiyya b. Abba stated: The sons of Aaron died on the first of Nisan. Why then is their death mentioned in the connection with the Day of Atonement? It must be to teach that as the Day of Atonement effects atonement, so the death of the righteous effects atonement. Whence do we know that the Day of Atonement effects atonement? From the fact that it says, For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you (Lev. XVI, 30) . And whence that the death of the righteous effects atonement? From the fact that it is written, And they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son (II Sam. XXI, 14), and it is also written, After that God was entreated for the land (ib.).”²

We have seen throughout this present writing how numerous rabbinic writings attribute that well-known chapter in Isaiah, chapter 53, to Moshiach. However, Rashi, in his Biblical commentary, said it referred to the

¹ Mirkin, Moshe Ariyah, *Midrash Rabbah Leviticus* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh Publishers, 1961), *Leviticus, Parashah 20.12, pp. 21,22.*

² Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman, ed., J. Israelstam, trans., *Midrash Rabbah Leviticus* (London, New York: Soncino Press, 1983), p 264.

“righteous in Jacob” who would prosper “at the end days,” assigning its fulfillment to a future day:

רש"י:
הנה ישכיל עבדי... הנה באחרית הימים – ילליה עבדי
יעקוב לדיקים שבו

Rashi:

“Behold My servant shall prosper [Isaiah 52:13] – Behold at the end of days, My servant Jacob, i.e. the righteous among him, shall prosper.”¹

The idea that it was the righteous in Israel suffering because of gentile persecutions against them gained popularity after Rashi, in his Biblical commentary, said it was so. Radak followed suit as did ibn Ezra. On the other hand, we have a great Jewish thinker like Rambam who assigned Isaiah 53 to Moshiach, finding a description of him there. Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin lends his voice to that of Rambam and feels that anyone who said the passage referred to Israel is giving the text an unnatural reading. Here is what they say:

Rambam in his Egeret Teman (Letter to Yemen):

רמב"ם אמר באגרת תימן:
איכות עמידת המשיח...שלא תדע עמידתו קודם היותה עד שיאמר
עליו שהוא בן פלוני וממשפחה פלונית אבל יעמד איש שלא נודע
קודם הראותו והאותות והמופתים שיראו על ידו הן הן הראיות
על אמתת יחוסו שכן אמר ה'ק'ב'ה כשספר לנו ענין זה הנה איש
צמח שמו ומתחתיו יצמח. ואמר ישעיהו כמו כן כשיראה מבלי
שיודע לו אב ואם ומשפחה ויעל כיונק לפניו וכשרש וגו'...
[ישעיה נג ב] אבל המדה המיוחדת לו היא בשעה שיגלה
יבהלו כל מלכי ארץ...וישימו ידם לפיהם שכן אמר ישעיהו בעת
ספר שישמעו המלכים לו אמר עליו יקפצו מלכים פיהם כי אשר

¹ Rosenberg, p. 42.

לא ספר להם ראו ואשר לא שמעו התבוננו...[ישעיה נב טו]¹

Rambam, "Letter to Yemen":

"What is the manner of Messiah's advent, ...thou canst not know this so far as it to be said of him that he is 'the son of such a one, and is of such and such a family:' there shall rise up one of whom none have known before, and the signs and wonders which they shall see performed by him will be the proofs of his true origin; for the Almighty, where he declares to us his mind upon the matter says, '*Behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall branch forth our of his place*' (**Zechariah 6:12**). And Isaiah speaks similarly of the time when he will appear, without his father or mother or family being known '*He came up as a sucker before him, and as a root out of the dry earth, etc.*' (**Isaiah 53:2**). But the unique phenomenon attending his manifestation is, that all the kings of the earth will be thrown into terror at the fame him...that they will lay their hands upon their mouth; in the words of Isaiah, when describing the manner in which the kings will hearken to him, '*At him kings will shut their mouth; for that which had not been told them have they seen, and that which they had not heard they have perceived.*' (**Isaiah 52:15**)²

Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin complains that some, avoiding the natural, literal interpretation of the text, have said that the prophet Isaiah speaks here collectively (of Israel):

משה הכהן ז"ל בן קרשפן:
הנה ישכיל עבדי (ישעיה נ"ב יג) דחקו לומר שהוא כמו ואתה ישראל
עבדי וגו' וא' ע' פ' ששם מדבר על עם ישראל שהוא לשון יחיד וכאן לא
הזכיר ישראל אלא עבדי סתם. ואין לנו לפרשו על ישראל. ועוד כי שם
קרא כל ישראל בשם ישראל אביהם או בשם יעקוב כמו שנא' שם

¹ Neubauer, p. 322.

² Halkin, p. 8.

ואתה ישראל עבדי יעקב אשר בחרתיך אבל כאן שאמר עבדי לבדו
וכל הפרשה בלשון יחיד ואין שום הכרח שמכריח אותנו לפרשה
על רבים ולמה זה נוציאה מפשטה ונפרש אותו על כלל ישראל.
וכמדומה לי שנעלו בפניהם דלתי הפירוש של פשט הפרשה הזאת
וילאו למצוא הפתח ועזבו דעת רבות' ז"ל...¹

Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin:

“The expression *my servant* [Isaiah 52:13] they compare rashly with **41:8**, ‘*thou Israel art my servant*,’ where the prophet is speaking of Israel (which would be singular); here, however, he does not mention Israel, but simply says *my servant*; we cannot therefore understand the word in the same sense. Again in **41:8** he addresses the whole nation by the name of their father Israel (or Jacob, as he continues, ‘*Jacob whom I have chosen*’), but here he says *my servant* alone, and uniformly applies the singular, and as there is no cause constraining us to do so, why should we here interpret the word collectively, and thereby distort the passage from its natural sense?

...As then it seemed to me that the doors of the literal interpretation of the Parashah were shut in their face, and that ‘they wearied themselves to find the entrance,’ having forsaken the knowledge of our Teachers...”²

Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin continues, saying that to interpret this passage of Israel and not Moshiach is “forced and far-fetched”:

משה הכהן ז"ל בן קרשפן:
ואני רוצה לפרש הפרשה הזאת על דעת רז"ל שפירשוה על המלך
המשיח ואזהר בכל יכלתי לשמר דרך הפשט ולא אדחוק להוציא

¹ Neubauer, p. 95 (Taken from Bodleian Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University, UK).

² Driver (English translation), p. 95.

הפסוק מפשטו ואולי לא יעבור עלי כל כך דחקים...הנבואה הזאת התנבא בה ישעיה ע"ה על פי יי להודיע לנו ענין המשיח העתיד לבא ולגאול את ישראל כיצד יהיה ענינו מיום שיעמוד על דעתו עד שיבא ויגאול אותנו כדי שאם יעמוד שום עומד ויאמר על עצמו שהוא משיח שנתבונן בדעתנו ונראה בעינינו אם נראה שענינו כמו שאמ' הנביא בנבואה הזאת אז נאמין שהוא משיח צדקנו...¹

Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin:

"I am pleased to interpret it, in accordance with the teaching of our Rabbis, of the King Messiah, and will be careful, so far as I am able, to adhere to the literal sense; thus possibly, I shall be free from the forced and far-fetched interpretations of which others have been guilty... This prophecy was delivered by Isaiah at the divine command for the purpose of making known to us something about the nature of the future Messiah who is to come and deliver Israel, and his life for the day when he arrives at discretion, until his advent as a redeemer, in order that if anyone arise claiming himself the Messiah, we may reflect and look to see whether we can observe in him any resemblance to the traits described here; if there is any such resemblance, then we may believe that he is the Messiah our righteousness..."²

Rabbi Naphtali ben Asher Altschuler expresses his surprise that Rashi and Rabbi David Kimchi also did not apply Isaiah 52:13 through chapter 53 to Moshiach:

ר' נפתלי בן אשר אלטשולר:
אני אפרש פסוקים אלו על משיחנו שיבא אכ"ר בימינו ותמיה למה לא פי רש"י ורד"ק על משיח ה' כמו שפי התרגום וז"ל הא יצלך עבדא משיחא וכו'...³

¹ Neubauer, pp. 95, 96, 108.

² Driver and Neubauer, pp. 99, 100, 114.

³ Altschuler, R. Naphtali ben Asher, *Ayelah Sheluchah ("Hind Sent Forth")*: A Commentary on the First Prophets, Book 4 (Amsterdam: Proops Publishers, 1777), נג, ישעיה.

Rabbi Naphtali ben Asher Altschuler:

“I will now proceed to explain these verses of our own Messiah, who, God willing, will come speedily in our days! I am surprised that Rashi and Rabbi David Kimchi have not, with the Targum, applied them to the Messiah likewise.”¹

Rabbi Altschuler then gives his reasoning for referring these verses to Moshiach:

ר' נפתלי בן אשר אלטשולר ממשך:
וישכיל באחרית הימים ואמר ירום ונשא וגבה לשון המעלה בכל לשון
לפי שמעלתו תהיה יתירה ועד לזה שאמר פ', זו על משיחנו כי
קודם לזה אמר פצחו רננו יחדיו חרבות ירושלים ואמר מה נאוו על
ההרים וגו', אמר על הנאולה ואח"כ מיד אמר הנה ישכיל עבדי
[ישעיה נב יג] וק"ל²

R. Naphtali Altschuler continues:

“The prophet says he shall be ‘high and exalted and lofty,’ expressing the idea under various forms, in order to indicate that his exaltation will be something extraordinary. It is a proof that the Parashah refers to our Messiah, that alluding to the future Deliverance, the prophet said before, ‘Break forth into joy, you waste places of Jerusalem’ (52:9) , and ‘How beautiful on the mountains,’ etc. (52:7) , and immediately afterwards continues, ‘Behold my servant shall prosper,’ [Isaiah 52:13] etc.”³

Rabbi Moshe Alsheich, interpreting this passage of Moshiach, reminds us that “our rabbis with one voice” referred it to Moshiach also:

ר' משה אלשיך:
הנה ישכיל עבדי...ואני בעניי לא מחכמה שאני דובר בהם בא

¹ Driver and Neubauer (English translation), p. 319.

² Altschuler, op.cit.

³ Driver and Neubauer (English translation), p. 319.

אחריהם כי אם להתיר את התיבות לפי פשט המקרא דרך ישרה
שיבור לו האדם ליישב המלות והקשרים ואשר לנוכח ואשר שלא
לנוכח. ואומרה בי הנה ז"ל פה אחד קיימו וקבלו כי על מלך
המשיח ידבר ואחריהם ז"ל נמשך...¹

Rabbi Moshe Alsheich:

“I therefore, in my humility, am come after them;
[the commentators], not with any sense of the
wisdom I am about to utter, but merely with the
object of applying to its elucidation a straightforward
method, in accordance with the literal sense of the
text...I may remark, then, that our Rabbis with one
voice accept and affirm the opinion that the prophet
is speaking of the King Messiah, and we shall
ourselves adhere to the same view...”²

**Regarding the sufferings of Moshiach, we read in the
notes of the Steinsaltz Edition of the Talmud:
“According to Rashi, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi and
Daniel were suggested as possible Messiahs [by Rav, d.
247, see Sanhedrin 98b], for they were both totally
righteous men and they both suffered severely from
various afflictions.”³ Paraphrasing some of Rav’s words,
Rashi says:**

רש"י, סנהדרין צח ב
אם משיח מאותן שחיים עכשו ודאי היינו רבינו
הקודש, דסובל תחלואים וחסיד גמור הוה,
כדאמרינן בצצא מליעא (דף פה) ואם היה
מאותן שמתו כבר - היה דניאל איש חמודות
שגדון ציסורין בגוב אריות וחסיד גמור היה.
היה והאי כגון לאו דווקא לייא כגון רבינו הקדוש

¹ Joseph Wiess, *Sefer Merot Hatzovot, Moshe Alsheich* (Brooklyn, NY: Nechmod Printing Corp., 1977), Vol. 1, p. 294.

² Driver (English translation), p. 102.

³ *The Talmud*, the Steinsaltz Edition (New York: Random House, 1999), notes on pp. 25, 26.

כלומר אם יש דוגמתו בחיים היינו רבינו הקדוש...¹

Rashi:

“If Messiah is among those living now [at the time of Rav - d. 247] he would, without doubt, be our holy rabbi [Yehudah HaNasi - d. 220, who suffered severe afflictions for thirteen years]. He suffered various afflictions and was completely pious, so it says in Babba Metzia 85a. But if among the already dead, he would be Daniel, a precious man who suffered in the den of lions...Another approach: If someone is like our holy rabbi, that is, if there is someone alive [i.e., Moshiach] he would be like our holy rabbi.”²

¹ Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b (New York: Shulsinger Bros. Linotyping & Publishing Co., 1948) p. 196.

² Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b (English translation by D. Pyle).

CHAPTER 7

MOSHIACH AND THE LAST DAYS

We now turn our attention to the subject of Moshiach and the “*acharit hayamin*.” Although the name of Moshiach is not mentioned in the following Biblical passages, yet because of the favorable events that accompany the “last days,” they are spoken of as the “time of Moshiach,” “days of Moshiach,” or “Messianic Age.” The Midrash on Genesis comments on Isaiah 65:25, that classic verse of the last days which speaks of the lion and the lamb feeding together:

מדרש בראשית רבה פרשה צה א
ואת יהודה שלח לפניו אל יוסף - כתיב: (ישעיה סה כה) 'זאב וטלה
ירעו כאחד ואריה כבקר יאכל תבן ונחש עפר לחמו', בוא וראה כל
מה שהכה הקדוש ברוך הוא בעולם הזה מרפא אותן לעתיד לבוא:
העורים מתרפאים, שנאמר: (שם לה ה') אז תפקחנה עיני עורים'
והפסחים מתרפאים שנאמר: (שם שם ו) 'אז ידלג כאיל פסח':
האלמים מתרפאים שנאמר: (שם שם שם) ותרן לשון אלם!..¹

¹ Mirkin, *Midrash Rabbah Genesis*, Parashah 94.1, pp. 160, 161.

Midrash Rabbah Genesis:

“...and he sent Judah before him unto Joseph (46:28).

This illuminates the verse, *The wolf and the Lamb shall feed together (Isaiah 65:25)*. Come and see how all whom the Holy One, blessed be He, hath smitten in this World. He will heal in the future that is to come. The blind will be healed, as it says, *then the eyes of the blind shall be opened (Isaiah 35:5)*; *And the tongue of the dumb shall sing. Thus all shall be healed...*” (A footnote by the modern editor of this parasha states: “The context shows this to refer to the resurrection.”)¹

The regathering of Israel in the days of Moshiach is seen in the Gemara of Berakhot 12b:

ברכות יב ב
תניא אמר להם בן זומא לחכמים וכי מזכירין יציאת מצרים לימות
המשיח והלא כבר נאמר הנה ימים באים נאם ה' ולא יאמרו עוד
חי ה' אשר העלה את בני ישראל מארץ מצרים כי אם חי ה' אשר
העלה ואשר הביא את זרע בית ישראל מארץ צפונה ומכל הארצות
אשר הדחתים שם... [ירמיה כג ז, ח]²

Berakhot 12b:

“It has been taught: Ben Zoma said to the Sages: Will the Exodus from Egypt be mentioned in the days of the Messiah? Was it not long ago said: *Therefore behold the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say: As the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, As the Lord liveth that brought up and that led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country and from all the countries whither I had driven them*”? [Jeremiah 23:7,8]³

¹ Braude, *The Genesis Midrash*, p. 88.

² Epstein, *Berakhot 12b*.

³ *Ibid.*

However, just previous to these favorable events, the nations of the world will be in strife:

פסיקתא רבתי לו
אמר רבי יצחק שנה שמלך המשיח נגלה בו כל מלכי אומות
העולם מתגרים זה בזה.¹

Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 36:

“R. Isaac taught: In the year in which the king Messiah reveals himself, all the kings of the nations of the earth will be at strife with one another.”²

Gog and Magog will wage war against Israel; afterward, the Wicked King (called Armilus) will arise:

מדרש ויושע
וכשיגיעו ימות המשיח יעלה גוג ומגוג על ארץ ישראל לפי שישמע
שישראל בלא מלך ויושבים לבטח...ויאמר לו הק"ב רשע עמי אתה
מבקש לעשות מלחמה בחיך אני אעשה עמך מלחמה מיד יוריד
עליו הק"ב אבני ברד שהן גנוזות ברקיע ויגוף אותן מגיפה
גדולה...ואחריו יקום מלך אחר רשע ועז פנים ויעשה מלחמה
עם ישראל...ושמו ארמילוס.³

Midrash waYosha:

“And when the days of the Messiah arrive, Gog and Magog will come up against the Land of Israel, because they will hear that Israel is without a king and sits in safety...And the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to him: You wicked one! You want to wage war against Me? By your life, I shall wage war against you! Instantly the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause hailstones which are hidden in the firmament to descend upon him and will bring upon him a great plague... And after him will arise another king,

¹ Shalom, Piska 36.

² Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati* 36, p. 681.

³ Jellinek, *Midrash waYosha*, part 1, p. 56.

wicked and insolent, and will wage war against Israel...his name is Armilus.”¹

The war scenario continues with the gathering of all the armies of the world by the Wicked King (Armilus) who will go up against Israel:

תפלת ר' שמעון בן יוחאי:
בא ארמילוס וילחם במצרים וילכדה...ומשים פניו אל ירושלם
להחריבה פעם שניה...ובעת ההיא יעמוד מיכאל השר הגדול
ותוקע בשופר שלשה פעמים...ואותו שופר הוא קרן ימיני של איל יצחק...
ותוקע תקיעה ומתגלה משיח בן דוד ואליהו והולכים שניהם אצל
ישראל...אומר להם אליהו זה הוא המשיח...ובאו האובדים בארץ
אשור...ומתועדים עם כל בני ישראל ויבאו אל ירושלם ויעלו
במעלות בית דוד הנשארות מן ההרס וישב שם המשיח וישמע
ארמילוס כי עמד ליש' מלך ומקבץ חיילות כל או"ה ויבאו למלך
המשיח ולישראל והק"בה ילחם בעד ישראל ואומר
למשיח שב לימיני... (תהלים קי א) ...ומיד הקבייה יוצא תלחם בס.²

T'fillat Shimon ben Yochai:

“Armilus will come and wage war against Egypt and capture it...And then he will turn and put his face toward Jerusalem to destroy it a second time...At that time Michael the Great Prince will rise and blow the shofar three times...That horn is the right horn of the ram of Isaac...and will blow Tqi'a, and Messiah ben David and Elijah will be revealed, and both will go to Israel...And Elijah will tell them: ‘This is the Messiah!’...And those lost in the Land of Assyria will come...And they will meet together with all the Children of Israel, and come to Jerusalem, and ascend the steps of the House of David which will be left from the destruction and Messiah will sit there.

“And Armilus will hear that a king arose for Israel, and he will gather the armies of all the nations of the

¹ Patai (English translation), *Midrash waYosha*, BhM 1:56, p. 159.

² Jellinek, part 4, p. 125.

world, and they will come to King Messiah and to Israel. And the Holy One, blessed be He, will fight for Israel and will say to the Messiah: 'Sit at my right' [Psalm 110:1]....And instantly the Holy One, blessed be He, will go forth and fight against them..."¹

Sadly, the T'fillat R. Shimon ben Yochai announces that many of Israel will be killed before this final victory:

תפלת ר' שמעון בן יוחאי:
ויחרה אף ארמילוס ויקבץ כל חיילי או"ה ועושה מלחמה עם בני ישראל
והורג מישראל אלף אלפים...²

T'fillat R. Shimon ben Yochai:

"And the wrath of Armilus is kindled, and he gathers all the armies of the world, and makes war against the Children of Israel, and he slays of Israel a thousand thousands."³

The Talmud in Sukkah 52a speaks of a great national mourning in the last days over Moshiach ben Joseph who is slain:

סוכה נב א
וספדו הארץ משפחות משפחות לבד למשפחת בית דוד לבד...וכמה
הא הספידא...בשלמא למאן סוכה דאמר על משיח בן יוסף שנהרג
היינו הכתיב והביטו אלי את אשר דקרו וספדו עליו כמספד
על היחיד [זכריה יב י].

Sukkah 52a:

"And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart and their wives

¹ Patai (English translation), pp. 158, 159.

² Jellinek, *T'fillat R. Shimon ben Yochai*, p. 125.

³ Patai (English translation), p. 158.

apart (**Zechariah 12:12**)...What is the cause of the mourning?...

It is well him who explains the cause is the slaying of messiah the son of Joseph, since that well agrees with the Scriptural verse, *And they shall look upon me because they have thrust him through, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son...*" [Zechariah 12:10]¹

Rashi, in his Talmudic commentary, is in agreement with the Talmud's statement that Moshiach is intended in this last day's scenario of Zechariah 12:10-12:

רש"י: סוכה נב א
וספדה הארץ. צנזואת זכריה ומתנבא לעתיד שספדו על משיח
בן יוסף שנכרג במלחמת גוג ומגוג.²

Rashi:

"The words, *'The land shall mourn,*' are found in the prophecy of Zechariah, and he prophesies of the future, that they shall mourn for Messiah the son of Joseph, who will be killed in the war of Gog and Magog."³

Moshe Alsheich, in his commentary on the prophets, gives a detailed account of the meaning of "and they will look upon me" in the above passage in Zechariah, saying that this one, Messiah the son of Joseph, will take upon himself all the guilt of Israel in order to make a "full atonement" for them:

משה אלשיך: על זכריה יב י
והביטו אלי את אשר דקרו וספדו עליו כמספד על-היחיד וגוי:
עוד שלישית אעשה והיא כי והביטו אלי שיתלו עיניהם אלי בתשובה

¹ Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 52a.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. (English translation)

שלימה בראותה אשר דקרו הוא משיח בן יוסף שחז"ל שיקבל על עצמו כל אשמות ישראל ויהרג אז במלחמות לכפר בעד באופן שיחשב כאלו ישראל דקרו אותו כי בחטאם מת ועל כן למען יחשב להם לכפרה שלימה יעשו תשובה והביטו אליו יתברך באמור כי אין זולתו למחול כמתאבלים על אשר מת בעונם וזהו והביטו אליו את וגו' (זכריה יב ט)¹

Moshe Alsheich:

“And yet I will do a third thing and it will be that when they look upon me and lift their eyes to me in full repentance, when they will see that the one whom they have pierced is Messiah son of Joseph, of whom our Rabbis of blessed memory have said, that he will receive upon himself all of Israel’s guilt, then he shall be slain in wars to make atonement for them in such a way that it will be accounted as though Israel has pierced him, for he died on the account of their sin; and therefore, in order that it will be accounted for them as a full atonement, they will repent and look upon him, the blessed one, as they say there is no one other than him who forgives; as they who mourn for the one who died for their iniquity; and that is the meaning of *‘and they will look upon me...’*” [Zechariah 12:10]²

The order of events in the Days of Moshiach:

מדרש הנעלם קלט:
רב יוסף וכי ימות המשיח ותחיית המתים לאו חד הוא א"ל לא דתנן בית המקדש קודם לקבוץ גלויות קבוץ גלויות קודם לתחיית המתים ותחיית המתים הוא אחרון שבכלם.³

Midrash haNe’elam:

“R. Yosef said: ‘Are not the days of Messiah and the

¹ Joseph Wiess, *Maraot Hatzuvot, Moshe Alsheich* (Brooklyn, NY: Nechmod Printing Corp.), Vol. 2, Zechariah 12:10.

² Translation by S. Znaty.

³ Margoliot, p. 276.

resurrection of the dead one and the same?' R. Nahman said to him, 'No. For we have learned that [the rebuilding of] the Temple will precede the ingathering of the exiles; the ingathering of the exiles will precede the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead is the last of them...'”¹

The dead in the land of Israel are expected to be raised in the days of Moshiach:

מדרש תנחומא ויחי
אמרו רבותינו שני דברים בשם ר' חלבו למה האבות מחבבין ארץ ישראל לקבורה, שמתי ארץ ישראל חיים תחילה לימות המשיח, (כג) ואוכלין שנות המשיח.²

Midrash Tanhuma, Vayachi:
“Our masters said two things in the name of R. Helbo: Why did the Fathers love to be buried in the land of Israel? Because the dead of the land of Israel will be the first to come to life in the days of Messiah, and they will eat [i.e., enjoy] the years of Messiah.”³

In Pirke Mashiach, we read about Moshiach's honored part in this last day resurrection:

פירקע משיח
באותה שעה מלביש הקב"ה למשיח עטרה וישים כובע ישועה בראשו ויתן עליו זיו והדר ויעטרהו בגדי כבוד ויעמידהו על הר גבוה לבשר לישראל וישמיע בקולו קרבה ישועה... באתה שעה עולה ומבשר לישני מכפלה ואומר להם אברהם יצחק ויעקב קומו דייכם תנומה והם משיבים ואומרים מי הוא זה שמגלה עפר מעלינו והוא אומר להם אני משיח ה' קרבה ישועה קרבה השעה והם משיבים אם בודאי כן צא ומבשר לאדם הראשון שיקום תחילה. באותה

¹ Patai (English translation), Zohar 1:139-b, Midrash haNe'elam, p. 208.

² Solomon Buber, *Midrash Tanhuma* (Wilna: 1885), Vol.1, vayachi, p. 214.

³ John T. Townsend, *Midrash Tanhuma* (S. Buber Recension) (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc.: 1989), p. 288.

שעה אומרים לאדם הראשון דיך תנומה והוא אומר מי זה שמנדד
שינה מעיני והוא אומר אני משיח ה' מבני בניך. מיד עומד אדם
הראשון וכל דורו ואברהם יצחק ויעקב וכל הצדיקים וכל השבטים
וכל הדורות מסוף העולם ועד סופו ומשמיעים קול רנה וזמרה...¹

Pirke Mashiach:

“In that hour, the Holy One, blessed be He, will crown the Messiah and place a helmet of salvation on his head, and give him splendor and radiance, and adorn him with clothes of honor, and stand him up on top of a high mountain in order to bring glad tidings to Israel. And he will let it hear with his voice: ‘Salvation is near!’

“...In that hour he goes up and brings glad tidings to those who sleep in Machpela, and says to them: ‘Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, rise! Enough have you slept!’ And they reply and say, ‘Who is this who removes the dust from over us?’ And he says to them: ‘I am the Messiah of the Lord. Salvation is near, the hour is near.’ And they answer: ‘If it is really so, go and bring the tidings to Adam the first man, so that he should rise first.’ In that hour they say to Adam the first man: ‘Enough have you slept.’ And he says: ‘Who is this who drives slumber from my eyes?’ And he says: ‘I am the Messiah of God, from among your children.’ Instantly Adam the first man and all his generation, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the pious and all the tribes and all the generations from one end of the world to the other rise and utter sounds of jubilation and song...”²

¹ Jellinek, *Pirke Mashiach*, p. 73.

² Patai (English translation), *Pirke Mashiach*, p. 202.

Midrash Rabbah Esther speaks of a third day resurrection:

מדרש רבה אסתר ט ג
ויהי יונה במעי הדג שלשה ימים ושלשה לילות. והמתים אינן חיים
אלא שלשת ימים שנ' (הושע ו כ) ביום השלישי יקימנו ונחיה לפניו.¹

Midrash Rabbah Esther:

“And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights... The dead also will come to life after three days, as it says, ‘*On the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His presence*’ (Hosea 6:20).”²

Only sacrifices to remain in the time to come will be that of thanksgiving:

מדרש ויקרא רבה סדר צו ט ז
ר' פינחס ור' לוי ור' יוחנן בשם ר' מנחם דגליא: לעתיד לבוא כל
הקרבנות בטלין וקרבן תודה אינו בתל, כל התפלות בטלות,
ההודאה אינה בטלה, הדא הוא דכתיב: (ירמיה לג יא) 'קול ששון
וקול שמחה קול חתן וקול כלה קול אמרים הודו את ה' צבאות כי
טוב וגו'. זו הודאה, (שם שם שם) 'מבאים תודה בית ה', זה קרבן
תודה, וכן דויד אומר: (תהלים נו יג) 'עלי אלהים נדריך אשלם
תודות לך: תודה אין כתיב כאן אלא 'תודות - ההודאה
וקרבו תודה³

Midrash Rabbah Leviticus:

“R. Phinehas and R. Levi and R. Johanan said in the name of R. Menahim of Gallia: ‘In the time to come, all sacrifices will be annulled, but that of thanksgiving will not be annulled, and all prayers will be annulled, but [that of] thanksgiving will not be annulled. This

¹ Rabbi R. H. Goldman, *Midrash Rabbah Esther* (New York: Tiferet Zion Publication Society Inc., 1959), Parashah tet, gimel.

² Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman, ed., *Midrash Rabbah Esther* (London, New York: Soncino Press, 1983), Parashah 9.3.

³ Mirkin, *Midrash Rabbah Leviticus, Seder Tsav*, parashah 9.7, pp. 95, 96.

is [indicated by] what is written, *The voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that say: Give thanks to the lord of hosts (Jeremiah 33:11)* – this refers to Thanksgiving: ‘That bring offerings of thanksgiving into the house of the Lord’ refers to the sacrifice of thanksgiving. So too did David say: *Thy vows are upon me, O God; I will render thanksgivings unto Thee (Psalm 56:13)*. It is written here not ‘a thanksgiving’ but ‘*thanksgivings,*’ meaning Thanksgiving [in prayer] and the sacrifice of thanksgiving.”¹

In a bit of beautiful prose recalling Israel’s history from Abraham and Sarah to the end times, the formula “who would have expected” is invoked to introduce each era of time. In the twelfth and final time, this formula is changed slightly to read “who would expect,” indicating a future time when all the world will call upon the name of HaShem and serve Him with one consent:

מדרש רבה בראשית סדר וישב פרשה פח ז
מי היה מחכה לאברהם ושרה שהיו זקנים, שילד להם בן: מי היה
מחכה ליוסף שעברו עליו כל הצרות האלו, שיהיה מלך: מי היה
מחכה למשה שהשלך ליאור, שיהיה כמו שנהיה: מי היה מחכה
לרות שהיתה גרה, שחזרה למלכות ישראל: מי היה מחכה לסכת
דויד הנופלת, שיקימנה הקדוש ברוך הוא, שנאמר: (עמוס ט יא)
‘ביום ההוא אקים את סכת דויד: שיהיו כל העולם אגדה אחת,
שנאמר: (צפניה ג ט) ‘כי אז אהפך אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרא
כלם בשם ה’ לעבדו שכם אחד.’²

Midrash Rabbah Genesis, Seder Vayeshev, 88:7:
“Who would have expected that a child should be
born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age?... Who
would have expected that Joseph should become a
king after undergoing misfortunes? Who would have

¹ Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah Leviticus*, Seder Tsav, IX 7, p. 114.

² Mirkin, *Midrash Bereshit, Seder V’yeshev*, parashah 88.7, p. 72.

expected that Moses, after being thrown into the Nile should become what he did become? Who would have expected Ruth, a proselyte, to attain to the sovereignty of Israel?...Who would have expected the Holy One, blessed be He, to raise up the fallen tabernacle of David, as it says, *In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen (Amos 9:11)?* And who would expect the whole world to become one united band as it says, *For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call jupon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent (Zephaniah 3:9).*”¹

¹ Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman, trans., *Midrash Rabbah Genesis*, Seder Vayeshev, parashah 88:7 (London, New York: Soncino Press, 1983), pp. 818, 819.

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APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF RABBINIC SOURCES

AUTHORS QUOTED

Abrabanel, Isaac ben Judah (1437-1508). The rabbinic author of a number of books that expressed hope for redemption. Abrabanel interpreted contemporary events of his day as messianic tribulations. He felt that the Spanish expulsion of the Jewish people in 1492 was a prelude to the arrival of the Messianic Age, which he calculated would begin in 1503. Among his works was *Yeshuat Meshicho* (“The Salvation of His Messiah”). He speaks about the days of Moshiach, explaining that in the Messianic days there will be no Evil Inclination and thus no sin, so the sacrificial offerings or prayers to atone for sin will not be needed, but only thank offerings and thanksgiving prayers.

Albo, Joseph (1380-1444) of Monreal in Aragon, Spain. A noted rabbinic Jewish philosopher whose major work was *Sefer Ha'Ikkarim* (“The Book of Principles”).

Alsheich, Moses (1508–1593). Alsheich was born in Turkey but settled in Safed, Israel, where he received his *smichah* (ordination) from the famous Rabbi Joseph Caro. Among his students was the famous Cabbalist, Rabbi Hayyim Vital. He composed influential and innovative homiletical writings. His important commentary on the Torah, *Torat Moshe*, gained great popularity and he became known as *Alsheich HaKadosh* (“The Saintly Alsheich”).

Altschuler, Naphtali ben Asher (lived in Russia and Poland at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century). Talmudic scholar and author of two works: *Ayal Sheluhah* (“A Swift Deer,” also known as “Hind Sent Forth”) a commentary on the Prophets and the Writings; and *’Imre Shefer* (“Beautiful Words”), an alphabetically arranged catalog of all matters that *dayanim* (rabbinical judges) and rabbis were likely to discuss.

Dessler, Eliyahu (1892–1953). His *Michtav Eliyahu* (*A Letter From Elijah*), which is a compilation of his lectures on Jewish life and thought, has become immensely popular. Born in Lithuania and educated in a yeshivah in Chelm, Poland, he became a rabbi in London, then became a *Mashgiach* (spiritual guide) at the Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnai Brak, Israel.

Elijah de Vidas (1518–1592). Kabbalist at Safed, Israel, and pupil of Rabbi Moses Cordovero. De Vidas is the author of *Reshit Hokhmah*, a book on morals containing all the moral sentences scattered throughout the Talmud, Midrashim and Zohar.

Gershom, Levi ben (“Gersonides”, “Ralbag”; 1288–1344) of France. Noted Jewish philosopher, who wrote sixteen books in the fields of rabbinics, philosophy, mathematics and medicine. His major work in Jewish philosophy was *The Wars of the Lord*. His commentaries on the later parts of the Bible are included in the *Mikraot Gedolot*.

Gersonides (see Gershom, Levi ben)

Hai Gaon (939–1038). The last Gaon of the rabbinical academy of Pumbeditha in Babylon from 998–1038. He was considered the supreme authority on Jewish law by later generations. His literary works include *Sefer haMimkar* (“Treatise on Commercial Law”) and *Sefer haSheterot* (“Treatise on Documents”).

Kimchi, Rabbi David (“Radak”; 1160–1235). A prominent medieval commentator who wrote commentaries on much of the Hebrew Scriptures. His commentary is included in the *Mikraot Gedolot*. He also wrote a Hebrew grammar, for which he is especially noted.

Maimon, Rabbi Moshe ben (“Rambam”, “Maimonides”; 1135–1204), born in Cordova, Spain but emigrated to Old Cairo (Forstat) in Egypt. Rambam practiced medicine and was appointed physician to Alfadhil, the vizier of Saladin. He was also appointed head of the Jewish community there under the title of *nagid*. As *nagid*, Maimonides gained his reputation as one of the great masters of Jewish law. His two works, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, and his code on Jewish law, *Mishneh Torah*, have become standard volumes for Jewish study and discussion to this day. From his commentary on Tractate Sanhedrin sprang the famous thirteen root beliefs in rabbinic Judaism, the “*Ani Ma’amin*.” A saying developed about him: “From Moses to Moses” (from Moses in the Torah to Moses Maimonides).

Maimonides (see Maimon, Rabbi Moshe ben)

Malbim (see Mikhael, Meir Loeb ben Yechiel)

Mikhael, Meir Loeb ben Yechiel (“Malbim”; 1809–1879), born in Volochisk, Volhynia. Universal recognition came to him because of his monumental commentary on the Bible. His commentary on Daniel was designed to show the unity of the Biblical and Oral Law, that they are one inseparable expression of God’s will. Reflected in his commentary was his belief that there were no redundant or superfluous words in the Bible.

Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin (14th century), Toledo, Spain.

Although not a major figure, ibn Crispin nevertheless has a place among the Judeo-Arabic thinkers and writers of his day like Joseph b. Abraham ibn Waqar (14th century), who wrote a book on theological matters called *Ma'amar haKolel*, and Solomon b. Ya'ish (d. 1345) who wrote a supercommentary on Abraham Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch. In the field of theology, Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin wrote a tract on providence and the afterlife. (See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, article "Judeo-Arabic Literature" by Abraham S. Halkin.)

Nachman, Rabbi Moshe ben ("Ramban", "Nachmanides"; 1194-1270). Ramban was the outstanding Spanish Talmudist of his day. His Torah commentary is the first major Bible commentary to introduce the new mystical teachings of Kabbala. He cites Rashi and ibn Ezra regularly (often to refute them).¹

Nachmanides (see Nachman, Rabbi Moshe ben)

Philo of Alexandria, Egypt (20 BCE-50 CE). Although not a rabbi, this famous Jewish philosopher wrote a commentary on the Torah. "He owes his position in the history of religious thought to that remarkable fusion of Hellenism and Judaism which we find in his voluminous writings."² It is said of Philo that he believed in the inspiration of the Bible in the strongest possible terms. In his treatment of the lives of Abraham, Joseph and Moses, whom he took as historical characters, he shows that the lives of these men have an edification for us. His ideology about God was "that while God is absolutely removed from us, incomprehensible and known as an absolute being, He is also infinitely close to us..."³ He postulated that the Logos and Powers are intermediaries between the uncreated (God) and the created (man).

¹ In his commentary on the Torah which appears alongside of Rashi and ibn Ezra in the *Mikraot Gedolot*.

² Colson, p. ix.

³ *Ibid.*, p. xix.

Radak (see Kimchi, Rabbi David)

Ralbag (see Gershom, Levi ben)

Rambam (see Maimon, Rabbi Moshe ben)

Ramban (see Nachman, Rabbi Moshe ben)

Rashi (see Yitzchak, Rabbi Shlomo ben)

Saadia Gaon (882-942) was born in Egypt and died in Sura, Babylon. At age 29, Saadia Gaon published his *Sefer ha'Egron* on Hebrew grammar and style. At age 46, he was appointed to the high office of Gaon of the Great Torah Academy of Sura and Babylon, the position held by the greatest scholars in Judaism. Of the twenty-four books he authored, his *Emunot v'Deot* ("Faith and Belief") is considered to be his greatest.

Rambam said about him: "*Were it not for Saadia, the Torah would almost have disappeared from among Israel.*"

Shimon ben Yohai (2nd century CE). The famous 2nd century Galilean rabbi who is said to have hidden in a cave in Galilee for thirteen years after he was put under a death sentence for uttering a truthful censure on the Roman governor. The historian Graetz tells us that ben Yohai was more matter-of-fact than imaginative in his reasoning with regard to Biblical laws.

Vital, Hayyim Joseph (1542-1620). Born in Israel to a well-known scribe, Joseph Vital Calabrese, R. Vital was one of the greatest Kabbalists. He was a student of Moses Alsheich and later of the famous Kabbalist Isaac Luria. He became a prolific writer; two of his major works are "Etz haHayyim" (The Tree of Life) and "Etz haDa'at" (The Tree of Knowledge). Etz haHayyim is organized into eight sections called "Gates." One of these sections is "Sha'ar haGilgulim," covering the doctrine of the soul and its transmigrations.

Yitzchak, Rabbi Shlomo ben (“Rashi”; 1040-1105) lived in Troyes, France. Rashi is considered the greatest of all the medieval commentators. Traditional Jews always begin their studies in Bible and Talmud with Rashi’s commentaries, which are printed in the standard editions of the Babylonian Talmud and in many Bibles as their main guide.

RABBINIC WORKS CITED

Babylonian Talmud. That great body of rabbinic commentary that originated in the rabbinic academies of Babylon and covers all spheres of Jewish life. The Talmud consists of two parts: the **Mishna** and the **Gemara**. The **Mishna** is a code of laws completed around 200 C.E. that forms part of the Oral Law. According to rabbinic tradition, the Mishna was given to Moses at Sinai along with the rest of the Oral Law and the Written Law and was then handed down through Joshua, the Prophets, and the Elders, to the Men of the Great Assembly and finally compiled and edited by Rabbi Yehuda haNasi (200 C.E.). Orthodox scholar Jacob Neusner tells us: “The Mishna is made up of sayings bearing the names of authorities who lived in the late first and second centuries. Approximately two thirds of the named sayings belong to the middle of the second century authorities...So, in all, the Mishna represents the thinking of Jewish sages who flourished in the middle of the second century. It is that group which took over whatever they had in hand from the preceding century – and from the whole legacy of Israelite literature even before that time – and revised and reshaped the whole into the Mishna.”¹ The **Gemara** is the **extensive commentary on the Mishna** that continued growing and developing at that time until 499 C.E. when it was compiled and edited. Sometimes the word “Talmud” is applied only to the Gemara.

¹ Neusner, Jacob, *The Mishna: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), Introduction, pp. xv, xvi.

Jerusalem Talmud (from the first half of the 5th century).

Called the Jerusalem Talmud, although it was produced in the Galilean towns of Tiberias and Sepphoris (and also Lydda). It is half the size of the Babylonian Talmud, and like the Babylonian, it consists of commentary (Gemara) on selected tractates of the Mishna. It is not studied as much as the Babylonian Talmud, which is considered by many to be more important.

MIDRASH. Deriving from the Hebrew root meaning “to search out,” *Midrash* is a type of literature; thus, there is no single book that can be called, “Midrash.” As the name Midrash implies, it is a process of searching out and interpreting the meaning of Biblical texts and occasionally, other sacred texts. As author Barry Holtz points out, “There are collections of various midrashim (plural for Midrash) which were put together by various editors and authors over the course of hundreds of years. The great flowering of Midrash was roughly between the years 400 and 1200 CE. But it is important to note that originally, Midrashic literature was oral sermons preached in the synagogues and teachings of various sages.”¹

The two types of Midrash are *Halakhah* (laws and codes of behavior) and *Aggadah* (everything else, i.e., narrative, homilies, parables, ethical statements, etc.). The best-known collection of Midrashim is the Midrash Rabbah, covering the five books of Moses and the Five Scrolls. It is comprised of texts collected by different authors at different times.

Midrash Alpha Betot (“Midrash of Alphabets”), probably from the 8th or 9th centuries. Midrash Alpha Betot contains a considerable amount of material on the last days, Gog and Magog, and Moshiach.

¹ Holtz, Barry W., *Back to the Sources* (New York; Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 178.

Midrash Aseret Memrot. Written by Abraham ben Benjamin Ze'ev (d.1700), it is a commentary on the sixth chapter of Avot in the Mishna.

Midrash haNe'elam (“The Hidden Midrash”). This was one of the earliest parts of the Zohar to be written. Gershom Scholem claimed that “all the sections of the Midrash Ne'elam from Genesis to Ruth, were a forerunner of the Zohar proper and were begun between the years 1275 and 1280.”¹ According to Scholem, Moses de Leon, the 13th century Kabbalist, was the author, and he completed the *Midrash Ne'elam* while working on the main body of the Zohar.

Midrash Konen (“Midrash ‘He established’”), composed not earlier than the 11th century. This Midrash deals with creation, paradise, and Hell.

Midrash Mishle (“Midrash on Proverbs”), compiled in the 9th century, probably in Babylonia.

MIDRASH RABBAH (“Great Midrash”). The collective name of “Rabbah” or (“Rabba”) Midrashim on the Five books of Moses and the Five Scrolls, dating from the 4th to the 12th centuries. These Rabbah Midrashim were for the first time printed together in Venice in 1545 and have on the title page for the first section: *Midrash Rabbah to the Five Books of Moses* (English translation of the Hebrew), and the second section: *Midrash Rabbah of the Five Megillot* (English translation of the Hebrew).

Midrash Rabbah Genesis. One of the oldest Midrashim. According to Raphael Patai, it is a product of Palestinian Amoraim (fourth century CE). Zunz holds that its material was collected and edited in the 6th century. It is a running

¹ Englander, Lawrence and Herbert W. Basser, editors and translators, with introductory notes by Lawrence A. Englander with Herbert W. Basser. *Midrash Ne'elam, The Mystical Study of Ruth, of the Zohar to the book of Ruth* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993), p. xii.

commentary on Genesis, verse by verse, and is mostly haggadic because Genesis does not contain law (unlike the other four books of the Torah).

Midrash Rabbah Exodus. Partly an exegetical and partly a homiletical Midrash, it was put into its final shape in the 11th or 12th centuries, but contains much older material.

Midrash Rabbah Leviticus. Mostly Palestinian scholars from the 3rd and 4th centuries are quoted. Composed in the 5th century CE.

Midrash Rabbah Numbers. This Midrash shows every mark of late origin, probably around the 12th century. It is believed that the framework for this Midrash is the ancient Midrash Tanhuma.

Midrash Rabbah Deuteronomy. This Midrash is divided into 27 sections, each commencing with a legal question, generally on a ritual subject. With few exceptions, the concluding words of each section are words of comfort and consolation and strike a Messianic note. Zunz assigns the probable date of its composition to about the year 900 CE.

Midrash Rabbah Ruth. One of the older Midrashim, written around the year 500 CE (according to Strack) by Palestinian Amoraim. The text mentions no rabbis after the 4th century (hence another evidence for its early date). It has been known as Ruth Rabbah since the printed Venice edition of 1545.

Midrash Rabbah Esther. A commentary on the scroll of Esther, dated around 500 CE and, according to its language, originated in Palestine. It quotes the Palestinian Talmud, Genesis Rabbah and Leviticus Rabbah, and is itself quoted by Ecclesiastes Rabbah and Midrash Tehilim.

Midrash Tanhuma. A Midrash on the Five Books of Moses, ascribed to Rabbi Tanhuma bar Abba of the second half of the 4th century. He was one of the most prolific haggadists

and was the pupil of the legendary Rabbi Huna. (If Rabbi Tanhuma is not the author of this Midrash bearing his name, at least his quotes appear throughout.) This Midrash Tanhuma is referred to in many other Midrashim. Rashi, who quotes from this Midrash in several passages of his commentary, is the first to call it by the name “Tanhuma.” There are two later Midrashim by this name because of the frequent quotes of Rabbi Tanhuma which appear in them. One, which has been lost and is known only from quotes, is called *Tanhuma Yelammedenu* (Yelammedenu rabbenu: “may our teacher instruct us”). The second, called “Tanhuma C” by scholars, is often referred to as Tanhuma Yelammedenu because it contains much of the material of the lost Yelammedenu. The Jewish Encyclopedia tell us that the Tanhuma C contains many passages from the first Tanhuma and the lost Midrash Yelammedenu and “...is, in fact, an amended edition of the two earlier works.”¹

Midrash Tehilim (“Midrash on the Psalms”). This Midrash consists of two parts, chapters 1-118 and chapters 119-150. Solomon Buber places an early date of the Talmudic period for the compilation of the first part (while a date of the 9th century is given by others). Buber suggests that the second part was added sometime between 1241 and 1340. The overwhelming body of material in Midrash Tehilim goes back to the Talmudic period with its earliest quotes being those of Hillel and Shammai (c. 1st century CE). The majority of teachers whom Midrash Tehilim quotes are Palestinian, introducing their sayings with the familiar, “Rabbi So-and-So said,” or “Rabbi So-and-So said in the name of Rabbi So-and-So.” Numerous accounts are given of the lives and personalities of these rabbis.

Midrash waYosha (“Midrash ‘And He Saved’”). This late 11th century Midrash is an interpretation of Exodus 14:30 through 15:18, the “Song at the Reed Sea.” It mentions Messiah from the tribe of Joseph who will be slain, and Messiah ben David.

¹ *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 15, p. 46.

Pesikta Rabbati. Probably called by the name *Rabbati*, meaning “greater,” to distinguish it from the smaller, earlier Pesikta. This Midrashic writing on the festivals of the Jewish year was composed beginning with the year 845.

Yalkut Shimoni (“The Shimoni Collection”). The most likely author of the Yalkut is Shim’on haDarshan (“Simon the Preacher”) of Frankfort. Usually just called *Yalkut*, it is a collection of Midrashim of fifty Midrashic works covering all of the twenty-four books of the Tenach. This best known and most comprehensive Midrashic collection was compiled in the 12th or 13th century. In the principal edition, *Salonica 1526-27*, the sources used in the Yalkut are given in the text.

Yemenite Midrash. Appears in Yehudah ibn Shmuel, *Midrashei Geula* (“Midrashim of Redemption”). A collection of Midrashim dealing with the Messianic age and accompanying events.

OTHER RABBINIC SOURCES

Egeret Teman (“Letter to Yemen”). The famous “Letter to Yemen” written by Maimonides (Rambam), to Jacob ben Nathanel al-Fayyumi, a Jewish leader in Yemen who was having problems with an Islamic leader who wanted everyone to convert to Islam, and with another individual who was claiming to be Moshiach. In this letter, Rambam notes Scriptures that describe the Messiah.

Genesis Rabbah of Rabbi Moshe haDarshan (“Moses the Preacher” 10th-11th centuries). A Midrash by Rabbi Moshe haDarshan, a French exegete and president of the Narbonne Yeshiva. He, together with Tobiah ben Eliezer, was the most prominent representative of midrashic-symbolic Bible exegesis (“derash”) in the eleventh century. This Midrash is known today only through extracts by other writers. Rashi used his writings.

Metzudat David. Begun by David ben Aryeh Loeb Alschuler (17th century) as he collected notes for a commentary on the Bible. This commentary on the Prophets and Hagiographa was completed by his son, Yehiel (Jehiel) Hillel ben David Altshuler and divided into two parts: (1) *Metsudat Zion* (“The Fortress of Zion”), a lexicological glossary; and (2) *Metsudat David* (“The Fortress of David”), a commentary on the Biblical text. These two sections of commentary are found in the Mikraot Gedolot alongside of Rashi, ibn Ezra, and others.

Palestinian Targum. This virtually complete Targum of the Pentateuch, known as *Neofiti I* (a translation of the Torah into Aramaic), was rediscovered in 1956 in the Vatican Library by A. Diez Macho.

Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (8th century). An apocalyptic Midrash written in Palestine, it begins with the well-known Mishnaic Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and then narrates events from Creation to Miriam’s leprosy. It also refers to eight of the ten times HaShem descended to earth and contains other subjects such as the *Amidah* prayer.

Pirke Mashiach (“Chapters of the Messiah”). A midrash fragment of Persian provenance, dating from the 7th to 10th centuries.

Sefer ha’Ikkarim (“Book of Principles”). Written by Joseph Albo (d.1444), the last of the medieval Jewish philosophers. This work could also be called “Dogmas of Judaism” and marks the end of the philosophical and theological classics of medieval Judaism. In it, Albo quite freely uses material from earlier works.

Targum Jonathan. The Babylonian Talmud (Meg. 3a) names Jonathan ben Uzziel, prominent pupil of Hillel (1st century B.C.E.) as its author. Rabbi Joseph ben Hiyya (270-333 C.E.) in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 94b, Meg. 3a, MK 28b), head of the Pumbeditha Academy in Babylon, quotes it frequently. “Thus, as early as the beginning of the

fourth century, this Targum on the Prophets was recognized as being of ancient authority.”¹ It originated in Palestine and was brought to Babylon where it became the official Aramaic version of the prophets read in the synagogue every week alongside the Hebrew text of the prophets. (This Targum is not to be confused with the Psuedo-Jonathan Targum originally called the Palestinian or Jerusalem Targum, which is an Aramaic translation of the first five books of the Law.)

Yalkut Hadash (“New Collection”), by Israel ben Binyamin of Belzice (17th century). A Kabbalistic collection of legends. There are various editions of this work.

Zohar (The “Book of Splendor”), the central work of Kabbalistic literature. Some hold to the opinion that this mystical body of writing was done by the famous second century rabbi, Shimon ben Yohai. Others, especially today, for linguistic and historical reasons, put it by the hand of Moses deLeon of Spain who would have written it between 1280 and 1300. The Zohar has been studied in reverence and awe throughout the Jewish communities of the world.

¹ *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Second Edition, 2007, Volume 4, p. 592.

Addendum

The Pesikta Rabbati, in similar words to those of the Yalkut on page 45, speaks of Moshiach's suffering for the sake of Israel and "on account of the iniquities of our children":

אפרים משיח צדקנו אף על פי שאנו אבותיך אתה גדול ממנו.
מפני שסבלת עונות בנינו. ועברו עליך מדות קשות שלא עברו על
הראשונים ועל האחרונים. והיית שחוק ולעג באומות העולם
בשביל ישראל. וישבת בחושך ואפילה ועיניך לא ראו אור. וצפד
עורך על עצמך וגופך יבש היה כעץ. ועיניך חשכו מצום וכחך יבש
כחרם [תהלים כב טז] כל אילו מפני עונות בנינו.¹

Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 37:

“Ephraim, our true Messiah, even though we are thy forbears, thou art greater than we, because thou didst suffer for the iniquities of our children, and terrible ordeals befell thee, such ordeals as did not befall earlier generations or later ones; for the sake of Israel thou didst become a laughingstock and a derision among the nations of the earth; and didst sit in darkness, in thick darkness, and thine eyes saw no light, and thy skin cleaved to thy bones, and thy body was as a dry piece of wood; and thine eyes grew dim from fasting, and thy strength was dried up like a potsherd [Psalm 22:16] – all these afflictions on account of the iniquities of our children...”²

¹ Dovidovitz, *Pesikta Rabbati*, Piska 37.

² Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati*, Piska 37. Translator, Rabbi William G. (Gershon Zev) Braude (translator of rabbinic works such as the *Midrash* on the Psalms, *Pesikta de Rav Kahane*, *Tana debe Eliyahu*), adds the following note to the above: “Now when Israel’s sins exceeded all bounds, God first vented His wrath on the sticks and stones of the Temple (see Piska 2:6; MTch 62:4 and 79:3; Tanhuma, *Tazri’a*, end of 9 [ed. Buber, 13]; Lam. Rabbah 4:11, p.148). It may be that after the Temple’s destruction the Messiah, by the same token, became a divine whipping boy upon whom God’s wrath was vented. For in the absence of Israel’s repentance, punishment for sin, for violation of the Torah, had to be imposed upon something or someone, in accordance with God’s design which preceded by 2000 years the creation of the world.”

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