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- Thought-provoking issues
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- Clear, easily understandable language and layout
- Challenging questions to consider at the end of each lesson

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We look forward to making many more rewarding learning experiences available to you in the future.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Yehoshua Werde
Director

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ב"ה



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Moshiach

Why we need Moshiach

The topic of Moshiach is on the one hand the most fundamental of all Jewish beliefs, and at the same time, it is also one of the most controversial.

The notion that the world has a destiny, that it was created with a purpose to achieve and an end-game when it will be achieved, goes hand in hand with the belief in Hashem that there is meaning and purpose to reality. This negates the notion that the here and now is all there is—the universe doesn't just exist, it exists with a purpose, and Moshiach is that purpose.

The ideal of Moshiach also negates the notion that imperfection is the ideal state of reality; the belief in the times of Moshiach means that the world can be better than it is right now, and that we can be better than we are today.

On a more personal level, as Yidden we have suffered and continue to suffer from antisemitism and persecution, and while it may seem that things are better today than they have been in the past, antisemitism is on the rise, and who knows what tomorrow will hold? For this to be the status-quo of our nation seems less than fair and certainly not ideal.

Golus and Geulah

In comparison to Geulah, Golus has been compared to a state of sleep and dreaming:

בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים

When Hashem returns the returnees to Tzion, we [will realize that we] had been like dreamers.

When a person is awake, his intellect governs his thoughts. But during sleep his imaginings run amok, so that his dreams may contain contradictions and absurdities.

This is the spiritual significance of Golus: the divine essence of man's soul is "asleep." His priorities are twisted and distorted, and he is blind to the blatant contradictions in his life. He may arouse his heart with a love towards Hashem in prayer, a love which ignites his soul with the yearning to divest itself of all material involvements and cleave only to Him, yet soon afterwards he immerses himself in the petty concerns and follies of life...

There is an analogy of a family thrown into a dark dungeon and left there for many decades with only a daily meal provided from a hatch in the ceiling. While the first generation remembers seeing the light of day, the second and third who were born in the dungeon can hardly even imagine that there is a world out there with a sun, meadows, hills and valleys, rivers and trees. While some of the prisoners hold onto their family tradition that such a world exists, others struggle to believe that it is even possible.

The dream of Golus feels so real that sometimes it is difficult to imagine that the world will ever be different.

Awaiting Moshiach

The Rambam (1138–1204) lists the belief and anticipation of Moshiach as one of the 13 principles of our faith (alongside belief in Hashem and in the Torah):

Rambam, 13 Principles of Faith, Principle 12

אֲנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. בְּבִיאַת הַמְּשִׁיחַ. וְאִף עַל פִּי שְׂוִתְמָהֶמָּה. עִם
כָּל זֶה אֶחְכְּמָה לוֹ בְּכָל יוֹם שְׂיָבוֹא:

I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Moshiach, and though he may tarry, still I await him every day.

The Rambam cites the biblical precedent for believing in and anticipating the coming of Moshiach, thus establishing that a rejection of Moshiach amounts to a rejection of Torah itself. (Note: believing and anticipating are two different things, the Rambam is referring to both.)

Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 11:1

וְכָל מִי שֶׁאִינוּ מֵאֲמִין בּוֹ אוֹ מִי שֶׁאִינוּ מַחְכֵּה לְבִיאַתוֹ לֹא בִשְׂאֵר נְבִיאִים
בְּלִבְדּוֹ הוּא כּוֹפֵר אֵלּא בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִשְׁנֵה רַבֵּינוּ שֶׁהֲרִי תוֹרָה הֵעִידָה עֲלֵינוּ
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתְךָ וּרְחַמְךָ וְשָׁב וּקְבַצְךָ וְגו' אִם יִהְיֶה
נֶדְחָךְ בְּקִצְהָ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְגו' וְהִבִּיאֲךָ ה' וְאֵלּוֹ הַדְּבָרִים הַמְּפֹרָשִׁים בְּתוֹרָה
הֵם כּוֹלְלִים כָּל הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁנֶּאֱמָרוּ ע"י כָּל הַנְּבִיאִים

Anyone who does not believe in him or does not await his coming, denies not only the statements of

the other Neviim, but those of the Torah and Moshe Rabbeinu. The Torah testified to his coming, as Devarim 30:3-5 states:

Hashem will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you. He will again gather you from among the nations... Even if your Diaspora is at the ends of the heavens, Hashem will gather you up from there... and bring you to the land....

These explicit words of the Torah include all the statements made by all the Neviim.

The Talmud tells us that one of the first things we get asked about after we depart from this world is whether we anticipated Moshiach:

Talmud, Shabbat 31a

אמר רבא בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין אומרים לו...צפית לישועה

Rava said: When they bring a person in for judgment (after he departs from this world) they say to him...“Did you anticipate Geulah?”

In Our Daily Prayers

For this reason, the sages instituted that we mention our anticipation of Moshiach in the 15th of the 18 blessings of the Shmoneh Esrei that we recite thrice-daily:

Shemoneh Esrei, 15th Brocho

...כי לישועתך קיווינו כל היום...

...for we hope for Your salvation every day (lit. all the day)...

Rabbi Chaim Vital (1543–1620) writes that when one recites these words, one should bring to mind the fact that they will be asked about this after 120 years.

Part of Aseres Hadibros, Faith in Hashem

Rabbi Yitzchak of Corbeil (13th century) cites the Aseres Hadibros as a source for believing in and anticipating the coming of Moshiach:

Rabbi Yitzchak of Corbeil - Sefer Mitzvos Katan Ch. 1

‘ידע שאותו שברא שמים וארץ הוא לבדו מושל מעלה ומטה ובד’ רוחות...ובזה תלוי מה שאמרו חכמים ששואלין לאדם לאחר מיתה אם צפית לישועה, והיכן כתיב מצוה זו? אלא ש”מ בזה תלוי, שכשם שיש לנו להאמין שהוציאנו ממצרים דכתיב אָנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ וגומר...כשם שאני רוצה שתאמינו בי שאני הוצאתי אתכם כך אני רוצה שתאמינו בי שאני ה’ אלוהיכם ואני עתיד לקבץ אתכם ולהושיעכם..

To know that He who created heaven and earth is the sole ruler above and below and in all four directions... This includes... [the principle] that man is asked in his judgment after death, ‘Did you long for salvation?’ The Torah source for this obligation is compounded in the above: just as we must believe that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, as it is written, ‘I am Hashem, your G-d, who has taken you out from the Mitzrayim’... so I want that

you believe that I am Hashem, your G-d, who will yet gather you and save you...

What Do the Times of Moshiach Entail?

What is there to look forward to with the coming of Moshiach? What unique things will transpire when Moshiach comes?

Kibutz Goluyos - The In-gathering of the Exiles

A utopian era would not be complete without all Yidden living together in our homeland, Eretz Yisroel. Thus, one of the first things that will take place with the arrival of Moshiach, is the in-gathering of the exiles in which all Yidden from every part of the world will be brought to Eretz Yisroel to settle there permanently; as the Posuk promises:

Devarim 30:3-5

וְשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתֶךָ... וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצָךָ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִפְצִיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁמָּה: אִם יְהִי נִדְחָךְ בְּקֶצֶה הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשָּׁם יִקְבְּצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּמִשָּׁם יִקְחֶךָ: וְהֵבִיאֲךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְרָשׁוּ אֲבוֹתֶיךָ וִירְשָׁתָהּ

“Hashem, your G-d, shall bring back your captivity... and He will return and gather you from all the nations where Hashem, your G-d, has scattered you. If your banished shall be at the utmost end of the heavens, Hashem, your G-d, shall gather you from there, and He shall take you from there. And Hashem, your G-d, will bring you to the land which your forefathers possessed, and you [too] will take possession of it.”

The Midrash refers to this as the primary achievement of Moshiach:

Bereishis Rabbah, Vayechi 98:9

מה מלך המשיח בא ומה הוא בא לעשות, לכנס גלותיהן של ישראל

For what purpose will Moshiach come, and what will he come to do? To gather the exiles of Yisroel.

Permanent Restoration of the Beis Hamikdash

While Eretz Yisroel is the Jewish homeland, the heart of Jewish life and the service of Hashem takes place in the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim. This will be restored permanently with the coming of Moshiach, as foretold by the Navi Yechezkel:

Yechezkel 37:26

וְנָתַתִּי אֶת מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְעוֹלָם:

I will place My Mikdash in their midst forever.

From a mystical perspective, the building of the Beis Hamikdash represents the culmination of the plan for creation, both on a personal level and on a global level:

Midrash Tanchuma, Nasso

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמן, בשעה שברא הקב"ה את העולם נתאוה שיהיה לו דירה בתחתונים כמו שיש בעליונים

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman said: When Hashem created the world, he desired to have a dwelling below just as he has above.

According to Chassidus, this is the primary purpose of creation, to fuse Elokus and the world to create a worldly abode for Hashem's presence. On a personal level, this entails making oneself more spiritually attuned by refining one's character to become a vehicle through which Hashem's instruction is carried out, and thus, collectively, we make society and the world a place that is more conducive to Hashem's presence. The restoration of the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim represents a culmination of this process when the world will become a permanent abode for Elokus.

Moshiach will Rebuild the Beis Hamikdash

How will the Beis Hamikdash be rebuilt? This is the subject of a machlokes. The Rambam places the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash as an identifying feature of Moshiach (indicating that it will be built by man):

Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 11:1

המלך המשיח עתיד לעמוד ולהחזיר מלכות דוד ליושנה לממשלה הראשונה ובונה המקדש...ואם יעמוד מלך מבית דוד...ובנה מקדש במקומו...הרי זה משיח בודאי

In the future, Moshiach will arise and renew the Dovidic dynasty, restoring it to its initial sovereignty. He will build the Beis Hamikdash... If a king will arise from the House of Dovid... and builds the Beis Hamikdash in its place...he is definitely the Moshiach.

The Beis Hamikdash will Descend From Heaven

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki 1040–1105) is of the opinion

that the Beis Hamikdash will not be rebuilt from man, but will instead descend from heaven already built.

Tosfos, Sukah 41a

פירש בקונטרס...מקדש העתיד בנוי ומשוכלל יגלה ויבא מן השמים

It is explained in Rashi that...the Beis Hamikdash of the future will appear and descend from heaven already built and perfected.

The Rebbe resolves this disagreement based on the posuk in Eicha “Its gates sunk into the ground” that the gates of the first Beis Hamikdash are extant and will be revealed when Moshiach comes. The Rebbe explains that the Beis Hamikdash will miraculously descend from heaven complete, minus its gates. Moshiach will then erect the gates, and by adding the finishing touches to complete the Beis Hamikdash, it will be considered as if he built the entire Beis Hamikdash himself.

An End to Evil and Sin

In addition to Yidden all coming back to Eretz Yisroel and the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, the coming of Moshiach will herald the end of all evil and sin forever. As the posuk in Yechezkel describes:

Yechezkel 37:23

וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ עוֹד בְּגִלּוּלֵיהֶם וּבְשִׁקּוּצֵיהֶם וּבְכָל פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם

And they shall no longer defile themselves with their idols, with their detestable things, or with all their transgressions.

How will this happen? Why will everyone suddenly stop sinning? The answer to this is that Hashem will remove the drive to sin, as the Talmud teaches:

Talmud, Sukah 52a

לעתיד לבא מביאו הקב"ה ליצר הרע ושוחטו

In the future, Hashem will bring the evil inclination and slaughter it...

The death of the evil inclination goes hand in hand with the revelation of the Shechinah. When Hashem's presence is felt, it is impossible to sin. While technically people will still have the potential and ability to choose to do as they wish (the ability to choose freely will not be removed), practically, the decision about what they should do will be an obvious one, so exercising ones ability to choose freely will not be necessary. Whereas, nowadays, our focus is on doing the right thing and determining what that is, however, when Moshiach comes, that will be obvious, and our goal will be to know Hashem more intimately (and to that there is no limit).

Universal Knowledge of Hashem

When Moshiach comes, Hashem's presence will permeate all of existence to the extent that we will be able to "know Hashem" intimately.

Yeshayahu 11:9

כִּי מִלְאָה הָאָרֶץ יְדָעָה אֶת ה' בַּיָּמִים לְגַם מִכְסִּים:

For the land shall be full of knowledge of Hashem as water covers the sea bed.

בעוה"ז שכינה נגלית על היחידים אבל לעתיד לבוא (ישעיה מ) ונגלה כבוד ה' וראו כל בשר יהדו כי פי ה' דבר.

In the present world, the Shechinah manifests Itself only to certain individuals [neviim]; in the time to come, however, (Yeshayahu 40) "the glory of Hashem shall be revealed and all flesh shall see together..."

Truth is all encompassing. It is the constant that runs through everything. The Hebrew word for truth, אמת - Emes, is comprised of the first, middle, and last letter of the Aleph Beis, indicating that truth is consistent, from beginning to end and throughout everything in between. Nowadays, it is impossible for anyone to know absolute truth because our senses, perception, and comprehension are all limited. We cannot possibly wrap our brains around everything there is to know.

The inability to "know Hashem" nowadays is not due to Hashem's presence not being found everywhere, for Hashem is infinite "and the entire earth is filled with his splendour." Our inability to know Hashem is due to our limitation. When Moshiach comes, somehow, as limited beings, we will rise above our limitation and be able to comprehend Elokus/ absolute truth. It is difficult (if not impossible) for us to comprehend now how our limited minds will be able to grasp the infinite, but it is the essential point of the era of Moshiach, that our limited reality will fuse with infinite Elokus (this is the concept discussed earlier regarding the creation of a dwelling for Hashem being the purpose of existence and how that will culminate with the coming of Moshiach).

Universal Worship of Hashem

Once the entire world recognizes Hashem's presence, it follows that they will serve Hashem. (I.e., that everyone will play their role in Hashem's plan for creation).

Zephaniah 3:9

כִּי אֶזְעַד אֶתְּכֻלָּהּ אֶל עַמִּים שְׂפָה בְרוּרָה לְקֹרֵא כָּלֶם בְּשֵׁם ה' לְעַבְדוֹ שְׂכָם
אֶחָד:

For then I will transform the peoples to a pure language that all of them call in the name of the Hashem, to worship Him of one accord.

It is one thing for everyone to serve Hashem (most people alive today ascribe to some form of service of Hashem in whatever religion they may be a part of), the uniqueness is that everyone will be in agreement about what serving Hashem entails. No more will there be differences of religion, for absolute truth will be revealed (and nothing will remain ambiguous for there to be any disagreement).

Rambam Hilchos Melachim 11:4

יתקן את העולם כולו לעבוד את ה' ביחד שנאמר כי אז אהפוך אל
עמים שפה ברורה לקרוא כולם בשם ה'

[Moshiach] will then improve the entire world, motivating all the nations to serve Hashem together, as the posuk (Tzephaniah 3:9) states: 'I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of Hashem and serve Him with one purpose.'

A Time of Universal Peace and Harmony

Once everyone recognizes absolute truth, there will be no reason for there to be differences between people, thus there will be no more war and universal peace will reign.

Yeshayahu 2:4

וְקָתְתוּ חֶרְבוֹתָם לְאֵתִים וְחַנִּיתוֹתֵיהֶם לְמִזְמְרוֹת לֹא יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל גּוֹי הַרְבֵּה
וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְחָמָה:

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Peace in the Animal Kingdom

The coming of Moshiach will not only affect us humans, the entire universe will be transformed, and the peace that will reign amongst humans will be reflected in animal kingdom as well:

Yeshayahu 11:6-9

וְגַר זֵאֵב עִם כֶּבֶשׂ וְנֹמֵר עִם גְּדִי יִרְבֹּץ וְעֵגֶל וְכִפִּיר וּמְרִיא יִחְדּוּ וְנֹעַר קָמָן
נִהְיֶה בָּם: וּפְרָה וְדֹב תִרְעֶנָּה יִחְדּוּ יִרְבְּצוּ יִלְדִיָּהוּן וְאַרְיֵה בִבְקָר יֹאכֵל תְּבָן:
וְשִׁשְׁעֵי יוֹנֵק עַל חֵר פָּתוּן וְעַל מְאוֹרֹת צִפְעוֹנִי גְמוּל יָדוּ הַדָּה:

And a wolf shall live with a lamb, and a leopard shall lie with a kid; and a calf and a lion cub and a fatling [shall lie] together, and a small child shall lead them. And a cow and a bear shall graze together, their children shall lie; and a lion, like

cattle, shall eat straw. And an infant shall play over the hole of an old snake and over the eyeball of an adder, a weaned child shall stretch forth his hand.

Life will be Easy

Life will not be physically taxing when Moshiach comes, since all of our chores and responsibilities will be performed for us without any effort on our part:

Eliyahu Rabbah 4

חיים שלא בצער לימות המשיח ולעולם הבא, כיצד, עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא לישב בבית המדרש הגדול שלו וצדיקי עולם יושבין לפניו... ועושין להן צורך בתייהן...

Life will be without pain in the times of Moshiach and in the world to come. How so? Hashem will sit in His great study hall and the tzadikim of the world will sit before Him...and their domestic chores will be performed for them (i.e., they will not require human attention)...

The world will be healed of all of the undesirable realities we see in the world today, such as hunger and bloodshed and the like:

Rambam Hilchos Melachim 12:5

ובאותו הזמן לא יהיה שם לא רעב ולא מלחמה ולא קנאה ותחרות שהטובה תהיה מושפעת הרבה וכל המעדנים מצויין כעפר

In that era, there will be neither famine or war, envy or competition, for good will flow in

abundance and all the delights will be freely available as dust.

An End to Disease and Death

This will also affect our health—our emotional and physical wellbeing:

Bereishis Rabbah, Vayigash 95:1

כל מה שהכה הקדוש ברוך הוא בעולם הזה מרפא אותן לעתיד לבא,
העורים מתרפאים... והפסחים מתרפאים...

Whatever Hashem has smitten in this world, He will heal in the world to come, the blind will be healed...and the lame will be healed...

The coming of Moshiach will mark the end of death:

Yeshayahu 25:8

בִּלְעַד הַמָּוֹת לְנֶצַח וּמָחָה ה' אֱלֹקִים דִּמְעָה מֵעַל כָּל פָּנִים

Death shall be swallowed up forever and Hashem shall wipe the tears from every face.

When the Adam Harishon was created, he was designed to live forever. Death came only as a result of his sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Life in its most basic form is everlasting, thus death is health-related, not soul-related. When our bodies are permanently healed, they will be able to hold onto our souls forever.

Recent advances in science make the idea of living forever a not-too-distant reality. In recent decades, the average lifespan

has increased considerably. The Navi Yeshayahu describes the longevity that will be in the times of Moshiach; he refers to a one-hundred-year-old as “a youth.”

Yeshayahu 65:20

לֹא יִהְיֶה מִשָּׁם עוֹד עוֹלָם יָמִים וְזָקֵן אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִמְלֵא אֶת יָמָיו כִּי הַנְּעַר בֶּן
מֵאָה שָׁנָה...

There shall no longer be from there a youth or an old man who will not fill his days, for the youth who is one hundred years old...

Techiyas Hameisim

Not only will those who are alive not die, but all those who did die will be resurrected:

Yeshayahu 26:19

יְחִיּוּ מִתֵּיבָה נִבְלָתֵי יְקוּמוּן הַקִּיּוּצוֹ וְרָנְנוּ שְׂכַנֵי עָפָר

Your dead shall be revived, my corpses shall arise; awaken and sing you who dwell in the dust.

The resurrection is an expression of the everlasting nature of human experience; not only in soul, but also in body. The sages spoke of a bone in the body called the Luz that remains intact even after the rest of the body has decomposed. Because this bone lasts forever, the body can be (and will be) reconstructed from it at the time of Techiyas Hameisim.

We tend to think about life as being temporary and death as being permanent. The concept of resurrection reverses that notion. Death is temporary, a thing that is revoked at the time

of the Techiyas Hameisim, whereas life is permanent (with only one short intermission that exists nowadays that we call death).

The Rambam places the belief in Techiyas Hameisim as one of the 13 foundational principles of our faith:

Rambam, 13 Principles of Faith

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה. שתהיה תחיית המתים ביעת שיעלה רצון
מאת הבורא יתברך שמו ויתעלה זכרו לעד ולנצח נצחים:

I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, Blessed be His name, and His mention shall be exalted for ever and ever.

And we also mention it in the Shmoneh Esrei that we recite thrice daily:

Shmoneh Esrei, 2nd Blessing

וְנֶאֱמָן אֶתָּה לְהַחְיֹת מֵתִים. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּתִים.

You are trustworthy to revive the dead. Blessed are You, Hashem, who revives the dead.

Miracles

Surprisingly, not everyone ascribes to Moshiach as a time in which supernatural events will take place:

Talmud, Berachot 34b

אמר שמואל אין בין העוה"ז לימות המשיח אלא שעבוד מלכיות בלבד

Shmuel said: There is no difference between this world and the days of Moshiach except [that in the latter there will be no] bondage of foreign powers.

The Rambam, for one, holds of this view, and explains how he understands the miraculous prophecies concerning the times of Moshiach in light of his opinion:

Rambam Hilchos Melachim 12:1

אל יעלה על הלב שבימות המשיח יבטל דבר ממנהגו של עולם או יהיה שם חידוש במעשה בראשית אלא עולם כמנהגו נוהג וזה שנאמר בישעיה וגר זאב עם כבש ונמר עם גדי ירבץ משל וחידה ענין הדבר שיהיו ישראל יושבין לבטח עם רשעי עכו"ם המשולים כזאב ונמר שנאמר זאב ערבות ישדרם ונמר שוקד על עריהם ויחזרו כולם לדת האמת ולא יגזלו ולא ישחיתו...וכן כל כיוצא באלו הדברים בענין המשיח הם משלים ובימות המלך המשיח יודע לכל לאי זה דבר היה משל ומה ענין רמזו בהן:

Do not presume that in the times of Moshiach any facet of the world's nature will change or there will be innovations in the work of creation. Rather, the world will continue according to its pattern.

Although Yeshayahu 11:6 states: 'The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the young goat,' these words are a metaphor and a parable. The interpretation of the prophecy is as follows: Yidden will dwell securely together with the wicked Goyim who are likened to a wolf and a leopard, as in the prophecy Yirmiyahu 5:6: 'A wolf

from the wilderness shall spoil them and a leopard will stalk their cities.’ They will all return to the true faith and no longer steal or destroy...

Similarly, other Messianic prophecies of this nature are metaphors. In the times of Moshiach, everyone will realize which matters were implied by these metaphors and which allusions they contained.

The problem with this approach is that the resurrection of the dead (that the Rambam himself lists as one of the 13 principles of our faith) involves supernatural phenomenon and the posuk attests to the fact that there will be miracles in the times of Moshiach:

Micah 7:15

כִּימֵי יָצִאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֶרְאֶנּוּ נִפְלְאוֹת.

As in the days when you left Mitzrayim, I will show you miracles.

The Rebbe answers this question on the Rambam, by dividing the times of Moshiach into two distinctly different timeperiods:

Lekutei Sichos vol. 27 p. 198

דארף מען זאגן, אז לויטן רמב"ם זיינען דאס צוויי באזונדערע ענינים און – אין באזונדערע זמנים: עם איז דא דער ענין זמן איו ימות המשיח וואס איז פארבונדן מיט ביאת המשיח, און עם איז דא א באזונדער ענין זמן נוסף, וועלכער וועט נתוסף ווערן לאחרי תקופת התחלת ימות המשיח. עם וועלן צוקומען הנהגות, זאכן וועלכע דער אויבערשטער

וועט טאן אין יענעם זמן, כולל אויך ענינים פון שינוי מנהגו של עולם

According to the Rambam, we must say that these are two different concepts that take place at two different times: There is the concept and era in the time of Moshiach that is associated with the arrival of Moshiach; and there is an additional, different concept and era that will be added following the era that begins the time of Moshiach, when there will be a new order of conduct, i.e., things that Hashem will do in that era, including ones that involve changing the natural order of the world.

A Time To Study Torah

With all the miraculous things that will happen when Moshiach comes, from the end to all suffering, illness, and death, to the universal peace, resurrection of the dead, and intimate knowledge of Hashem, we will have a lot of time on our hands. What will we do with all that time? The purpose of this time is to allow Yidden to freely study Torah and perform mitzvos without distraction:

Rambam Hilchos Teshuvah 9:2

נתאוו כל ישראל נביאיהם וחכמיהם לימות המשיח כדי שינוחו ממלכות שאינן מניחות להן לעסוק בתורה ובמצות כהוגן

For these reasons, all Yidden, [in particular,] their neviim and their Sages, have yearned for the times of Moshiach so they can rest from the [oppression of] the gentile kingdoms who do not allow them to occupy themselves with Torah and mitzvos

properly.

When Moshiach comes, the knowledge of Hashem won't just be a reality that exists, it will be a continual pursuit and our primary occupation:

Rambam Hilchos Melachim 12:5

לא יהיה עסק כל העולם אלא לדעת את ה' בלבד ולפיכך יהיו ישראל חכמים גדולים ויודעים דברים הסתומים וישיגו דעת בוראם כפי כח האדם שנאמר כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה' כמים לים מכסים:

The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know Hashem. Therefore, the Yidden will be great sages and know the hidden matters, grasping the knowledge of their Creator according to the full extent of human potential, as Yeshayahu 11:9 states: 'The world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem as the waters cover the ocean bed.'

We Will Not Know Until it Happens

As much as is written about what will be when Moshiach comes, we cannot know what it will be like exactly until it happens, as the Rambam writes:

Rambam Hilchos Melachim 12:2

כל אלו הדברים וכיוצא בהן לא ידע אדם איך יהיו עד שיהיו שדברים סתומין הן אצל הנביאים גם החכמים אין להם קבלה בדברים אלו אלא לפי הכרע הפסוקים ולפיכך יש להם מחלוקת בדברים אלו

All these and similar matters cannot be definitely known by man until they occur for these matters

are undefined in the Navi's words and even the wise men have no established tradition regarding these matters except their own interpretation of the pesukim. Therefore, there is a controversy among them regarding these matters.

Moshiach, The Person

We've discussed a lot about anticipating Moshiach and what will be when Moshiach comes, but what do we know about Moshiach as a person?

Is Moshiach Human?

While there is an opinion in the Talmud that Moshiach will not be a physical person, it is a minority opinion that was completely overruled by the vast majority of sages and even in times of the Talmud was considered an inflammatory remark:

Talmud, sanhedrin 99a

רבי הילל אומר: אין להם משיח לישראל (רש"י: אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא ימלוך בעצמו ויגאלם לבדו), שכבר אכלוהו בימי חזקיה. אמר רב יוסף: שרא ליה מריה לרבי הילל!

R. Hillel said: There shall be no Moshiach for Yidden (but Hashem will Himself redeem them and rule over them - Rashi), because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Chizkiya. R. Yoseph said: May Hashem forgive him [for saying so].

The Chasam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Schreiber 1762–1839) maintains that denying the coming of Moshiach as a human

being is tantamount to denying the Torah:

Chasam Sofer, Responsa vol. 2 356

האומר אין משיח וקים לי כרבי הלל הרי הוא כופר בכלל התורה
דכיילי אחרי רבים להטות כיון שרבו עליו חכמי ישראל ואמרו דלא
כוותי שוב אין אדם ראוי להמשך אחריו

He who says there is no Moshiach and follows the opinion of R' Hillel, he denies the Torah in general that upholds the principle of following the majority in rulings, since he was overruled by the majority of Jewish sages who did not agree with him, from then on, it is not befitting for any man to follow his opinion.

The reason why it is so important for Moshiach to be human is because the function of Moshiach is to fuse the spiritual realm with the physical realm. As the person who brings this about, Moshiach must himself be a human being who is attuned to both spiritual and physical elements.

A Descendant of Dovid

The only qualification of Moshiach's origins is that he be patrilineally descended from Dovid Hamelech (through his son Shlomo):

Yeshayahu 11:1

וְצֶאֱת הַטֵּר מִגֵּזַע יִשָּׁי וְנֹצֵר מִשָּׁרְשָׁיו יִפְרֶה

And a shoot shall spring forth from the stem of Yishai, and a twig shall sprout from his roots.

Yiremiah 23:5-6

הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם ה' וְהִקְמֹתִי לְדָוִד צֶמַח צְדִיק וּמִלֵּךְ מִלֵּךְ וְהִשְׁכִּיל
וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וַיְצַדֵּק בְּאֶרֶץ: בְּיָמָיו תִּשְׁעַת יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁבֹּן לְבֵטָח...

Behold, days are coming, says Hashem, when I will set up of Dovid a righteous shoot, and he shall reign a king and prosper, and he shall perform judgment and righteousness in the land. In his days, Yehudah shall be saved and Yidden shall dwell safely...

Moshiach is meant to be a successor to Dovid Hamelech and the Dovidic dynasty as Hashem promised to keep the kingship in Dovid's line forever.

Qualifications of Moshiach

In order to help us discern between the real Moshiach and an impostor, the Rambam outlines a list of qualifications that Moshiach must meet before he is considered to be Moshiach. He also mentions additional qualifications for him to be Moshiach for certain.

Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 11:4

וּאִם יַעֲמֹד מֶלֶךְ מִבֵּית דָּוִד הוֹגֵה בַתּוֹרָה וְעוֹסֵק בַּמִּצְוֹת כְּדָוִד אָבִיו
כְּפִי תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּכַתָּב וּשְׁבַעֵל פֶּה וַיִּכּוֹף כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לִילָךְ בָּהּ וּלְחַזֵּק בְּדַקָּה
וַיִּלְחַם מִלְחָמוֹת ה' הָרִי זֶה בַּחֲזָקָתָהּ שֶׁהוּא מְשִׁיחַ אִם עָשָׂה וְהִצְלִיחַ וּבָנָה
מִקְדָּשׁ בְּמִקְוָמוֹ וּקְבִץ נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָרִי זֶה מְשִׁיחַ בּוֹדָאֵי וַיִּתְקַן אֶת
הָעוֹלָם כּוֹלּוֹ לְעִבּוֹד אֶת ה' בִּיחָד

If a king will arise from the House of Dovid who diligently contemplates the Torah and observes its mitzvot as prescribed by the Written Torah and the

Oral Torah as Dovid, his ancestor, and will compel all Yidden to walk in (the ways of the Torah) and rectify the breaches in its observance, and fight the wars of Hashem, we may, with assurance, consider him Moshiach.

If he succeeds in the above, builds the Beis Hamikdash in its place, and gathers the dispersed Yidden, he is definitely Moshiach.

He will then improve the entire world, motivating all the nations to serve Hashem together, as Tzephaniah 3:9 states: 'I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of Hashem and serve Him with one purpose.'

Moshiach's Personality

Elsewhere, The Rambam describes the personality of Moshiach:

Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 9:2

אותו המלך שיעמוד מזרע דוד בעל חכמה יהיה יתר משלמה ונביא גדול הוא קרוב למשה רבינו ולפיכך ילמד כל העם ויורה אותם דרך ה' ויבואו כל הגוים לשומעו

The king who will arise from Dovid's descendants will be a greater master of knowledge than Shlomo and a great navi, close to the level of Moshe Rabbeinu. Therefore, he will teach the entire nation and instruct them in the path of Hashem. All the

gentile nations will come to hear him.

How Will He Know it is Him?

Considering that Moshiach will be a humble person, how will he know that he is the chosen one?

Iggeres Teiman ch. 4

אבל איכות עמידתו דע שלא תדע עמידתו קודם היותה עד שיאמר עליו...יעמוד איש שלא נודע קודם הראותי, והאותות והמופתים שיראו על ידו הן הן הראיות על אמתת יחוסו

With respect to his arising, he will not be known beforehand until it is declared to him... a man, unknown prior to his manifestation, shall rise, and the signs and wonders that will come about through him will be the proof for the authenticity of his claim and pedigree...

The Chasam Sofer draws an analogy in this regard to previous redeemers of Yidden:

Chasam Sofer, Responsa 6:96

והנה בהא דביאת בן דוד צריך אני להציע הצעה א' והוא כמו שהי' משרע"ה שהי' הגואל הראשון נזדקין שמנים שנה ולא ידע ולא הרגיש בעצמו שהוא יהי' גואל ישראל ואפי' כשאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא לך כי אשלחך אל פרעה מ"מ סירב ולא רצה לקבל על עצמו כן יהי' אי"ה הגואל האחרון ומיום שחרב בהמ"ק מיד נולד א' הראוי' בצדקתו להיות גואל ולכשיגיע הזמן יגלה אליו השי"ת וישלחו ואז יערה עליו רוחו של משיח הטמון ונזנו למעלה עד בוא וכאשר מצינו בשאול אחר שנמשח באה עליו רוח ממשלה ורוח הקודש אשר מלפנים לא הרגיש בעצמו

כן...והצדיק הזה בעצמו אינו יודע ובעונותינו כי רבו כבר כמה וכמה מתו ולא זכינו שיערה עליהם רוחו של משיח גם כי הם ראו" לכך אבל הדור לא הי' ראו"

As for the coming of the son of Dovid, I need to posit the following premise: Moshe Rabbeinu the first redeemer of Yidden, reached the age of eighty years and did not know or sense that he would redeem Yidden. Even when Hashem said to him, 'Come and I will send you to Pharaoh...' (Shemos 3:10), he declined and did not want to accept that mission. So it will be with the final redeemer.

The very day that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, was born one who, by virtue of his righteousness, is fit to be the redeemer. At the proper time Hashem will reveal Himself to him and send him, and then will dwell upon him the spirit of Moshiach which is hidden and concealed above until his coming.

Thus we find also with Shaul Hamelech that the spirit of royalty and the Ruach Hakodesh which he had not sensed at all within himself came upon him after he was anointed... The Tzadik himself does not realize this potential. Because of our sins many such Tzadikim passed away already. We did not merit that the spirit of Moashiach was conferred upon them. They were fit and appropriate for this, but their generations were not fit...

Identifying a Moshiach Candidate

Because every generation has a person who is fit to be Moshiach if people are deserving, it was common for students to point to their Rebbes as likely candidates to be Moshiach. This practice dates back to the times of the Talmud:

Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b

משיח. מה שמו? דבי רבי שילא אמרי: שילה שמו...דבי רבי ינאי אמרי: ינון שמו...דבי רבי חנינה אמר: חנינה שמו...ויש אומרים מנחם בן חזקיה שמו...ורבנן אמרי: חיזורא דבי רבי שמו...אמר רב נחמן: אי מן חייא הוא - כגון אנא...אמר רב: אי מן חייא הוא - כגון רבינו הקדוש, אי מן מתיא הוא - כגון דניאל

What is Moshiach's name? The School of R. Shila said: His name is Shiloh...The School of R. Yannai said: His name is Yinnon...The School of R. Chaninah maintained: His name is Chaninah...Others say: His name is Menachem the son of Chizkiya...The Rabbis said: His name is the leper scholar...R. Nahman said: if he [Moshiach] is of those living [today], it might be one like myself...Rav said: if he is of the living, it would be Rabeinu Hakadosh [Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi]; if of the dead, it would have been Daniel.

Rashi Ad loc.

כל אחד היה דורש אחר שמו

Each school picked the name of its own master.

Messianic Claimants and Impostors

Over the centuries, dozens of Messianic claims have been made, some were worthy individuals who perhaps might have been Moshiach had the time been right, and others were downright impostors. Some of the more popular ones include:

Shimeon bar Kochba (died 135 CE) was a Jewish leader who revolted against the Roman Empire in 132 CE and succeeded in establishing an independent Jewish state in Eretz Yisroel. Unfortunately, it only lasted three years at which point Bar Kochba was killed and the land returned to Roman rule. Rabbi Akivah claimed that Bar Kochba was (potentially) Moshiach, while the Sages disagreed with Rabbi Akivah. The Rambam writes that once they killed Bar Kochbah, it became clear that he was no longer a Messianic candidate.

In the 12th century, there was a Messianic claimant from Yemen just as the Muslims were making determined efforts to convert the Yidden living there. He declared the misfortunes of the time to be prognostications of the coming of Moshiach, and called upon the Yidden to divide their property with the poor. He was the subject of The Rambam's Iggeres Teiman (The Yemen Epistle). He continued his activity for a year, when he was arrested by the Muslim authorities and beheaded at his own suggestion, it is said, in order that he might prove the truth of his mission by returning to life. Nothing is known beyond the mention of him in the Rambam's "Iggeres Teman."

Early in the 16th century, Dovid Reuveini (1490–1541) pretended to be the ambassador and brother of the King of Khaibar, a town and former district of Arabia, in which the descendants of the "lost tribes" of Reuven and Gad were

supposed to dwell. He claimed he was sent to the Pope and the powers of Europe to secure cannon and firearms for war against the Muslims, who prevented the union of the Yidden living on the two sides of the Red Sea. While he denied expressly that he was Moshiach or a navi, claiming that he was merely a warrior, the credence which he found at the papal and Portuguese courts and the temporary cessation of persecution of the Marranos—all gave the Portuguese and Spanish Marranos reason to believe that Reuveni was a forerunner of Moshiach. Ultimately, Reuveni was imprisoned in Spain by the inquisition and most likely died in prison.

Shabsai Tzvi (1626–1676) was the most infamous of Messianic claimants. He was a Turkish Jew and kabbalist who claimed to be Moshiach. In reality it was Nasan of Gaza, his close disciple and right-hand man, who was responsible for spreading the word about Shabsai Tzvi through letters to Jewish communities across Europe. This led a significant percentage of world Jewry, including many popular rabbis, to believe that the time of their Geulah had finally arrived. In 1666, Shabsai was imprisoned by the Turkish Sultan who made him choose between beheading or conversion to Islam. Shabsai's decision to convert to Islam dashed the hopes of the Jewish community for the Geulah, however, some of his followers continued to believe in his coming and converted to Islam with him.

Hastening the Geulah

What can we do to bring Moshiach?

The coming of Moshiach isn't something that just happens, it is the product of a cumulative effort of individuals throughout Jewish history, who, by performing individual deeds, hastened

his coming.

Our generation has been described as a midget standing on a giant's shoulders. We may not be deserving of Moshiach if our actions were counted on their own, but together with all of the mitzvos performed by our ancestors before us, we are very close to deserving Moshiach's arrival.

On many occasions the Rebbe announced that this generation is the final generation of Golus and the first generation of Geulah, because Moshiach is almost here.

The Rebbe pointed to changes in the world that he saw as signs of Moshiach's coming, such as the fall of communism:

Sefer Hasichos 5750, 1:159-160

There are those who are surprised at the recent statements asserting that we are standing at the end of Golus, on the threshold of the Geulah. They ask: "Where do we see this? After all, the world continues to run as normal, year after year." In truth, however, what is surprising is that these people do not contemplate current well-publicized events.

In the recent past, extreme and radical transformations have been transpiring around the world. Thanks to Hashem's kindness, these upheavals are happening quietly, that is to say, without wars and bloodshed, heaven forbid, but through the paths of diplomacy. These changes are so quiet and peaceful, that daily life and

regular routines (commerce and the like) continue unaffected, despite the extreme transformations taking place in the country.

This starts with Russia, the country from which my father-in-law, the Rebbe, emigrated, along with his students and emissaries. For seventy years, a powerful and fearsome regime cast its terror over all the inhabitants of the country, to the point that the slightest expression of criticism of the regime was punishable by exile to Siberia or similar places. Suddenly now, in the shortest period of time, a polar change took place in the country's government (led by the country's political leaders), and this change spread to other countries of the Soviet Bloc.

In China, similarly, this last period has seen an inner transformation in the governance of the country and also in the nature of its relations to the other countries of the world. Also in India, in a relatively short span of time, a government that had held sway for a long time was rejected in favor of a new one. There were similar extreme changeovers in several other countries around the world.... These are countries with enormous populations, governments and regimes that rule billions of people all over the world—a majority of the world's population!

It is an unfathomable wonder that people are not

paying attention to all of this; even the beneficiaries of the miracles do not recognize their own miracle! The miracle in all this is that these extreme transformations, which directly influence a majority of the world, are taking place quietly and tranquilly, something that has no parallel or precedent whatsoever in all of human history.

Historically, regime changes have always been accompanied by bloody wars carried on over a long period of time, which dried up the course of life and brought ruin and destruction, Hashem preserve us. There is no need to search too far into the history of previous generations, for we saw in our generation the awful ruin of the Second World War (may such trouble never recur).

But now, even greater transformations are occurring in most of the world, and thanks to Hashem's kindness, they are without wars or bloodshed, Hashem forbid, but are quiet and tranquil.

A Single Deed

In this spirit, the Rebbe urged us to follow the Rambam's advice to see every opportunity to perform a mitzvah as one that may just tip the scales and be the final deed that will merit the Geulah:

צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולה, כאילו חצייו זכאי וחצייו חייב; וכן כל העולם, חצייו זכאי וחצייו חייב: הטא חטא אחד-הרי הכריע עצמו והכריע את כל העולם כולו לכף חובה, וגרם להם השחתה; עשה מצוה אחת-הרי הכריע את עצמו והכריע את כל העולם כולו לכף זכות, וגרם להן תשועה והצלה.

Throughout the entire year, a person should always look at himself as equally balanced between merit and sin and the world as equally balanced between merit and sin. If he performs one sin, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of guilt and brings destruction upon himself.

[On the other hand,] if he performs one mitzvah, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and brings deliverance and salvation to himself and others.

While all mitzvos hasten the coming of Moshiach, there are a few mitzvos about which this is said in particular.

Teshuvah

The Frieddiker Rebbe promoted the slogan “the sooner we do teshuvah (return to Hashem), the sooner the Geulah will come.” This is based on the following posuk:

וְשָׁבַתְּ עַד ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלֹ כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם אֶתְּךָ וּבָנֶיךָ כָּל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשֶׁךָ: וְשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתְךָ וְרַחֲמֶךָ וְשָׁב

וְקַבְּצָהּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִפִּיצָהּ ה' אֱלֹהֶיהָ שָׁמָּה:

When you return unto Hashem, your G-d, and will listen to His voice... Hashem, your G-d, will return your captivity and have compassion upon you, and He will restore and gather you from all the nations to which Hashem, your G-d, has dispersed you...

Shabbos

Keeping Shabbos is said to hasten the Geulah:

Shemot Rabbah 25:12

אמר רבי לוי: אם משמרים ישראל את השבת כראוי, אפילו יום אחד,
בן דוד בא

Rabbi Levi said: If Yidden keep Shabbos in a befitting manner, even for one day, the son of Dovid (Moshiach) will come

Torah Study

The Zohar writes about Torah study:

Zohar III 270a

בזכותא דאורייתא יפקון ישראל מן גלותא

By virtue of Torah Yidden will be gathered in from Golus.

Elsewhere the Zohar says this specifically about studying the inner dimension of Torah (Kabbalah and Chassidus).

Tzedakah

Giving tzedakah:

Yeshayahu 1:27

צִיּוֹן בְּמִשְׁפָּט תִּפְדָּה וְשָׁבֶיהָ בְצֶדֶק

Tzion shall be redeemed by justice and her returnees by tzedakah.”

Jewish Unity

Before Yaakov Avinu passed away, the posuk tells us that he gathered his sons together and told them about the end of days. The Midrash tells us that he relayed to them the following secret:

Aggadas Bereishis 82 [83]

אֵעָפִי שְׂאִינוּ יָדוּעַ אִימְתֵי יוֹם הַדִּין, אֲלֵא הֲרִי אֲנִי אוֹמֵר לָכֶם כִּשְׂתַּאסְפוּ וְתִקְבְּצוּ, אוֹתָהּ שְׁעָה אַתֶּם נִגְאָלִין,

Though it is not known when the Day of Judgment will be, I do tell you that the hour you gather and assemble together you shall be redeemed.

Studying the Torah of Moshiach

The Rebbe spoke on several occasions (particularly in the later years) about studying about Moshiach to prepare ourselves for his coming, and how that itself hastens Moshiach's coming.

In the merit of our studying about Moshiach, may we merit to see the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days!

Take-aways

- » Besides for being foretold in Torah and by the Neviim, the coming of Moshiach is necessitated by the need for an end to the harshness of Golus itself.
- » Awaiting Moshiach is a foundational principle in Yiddishkeit.
- » The times of Moshiach will bring the gathering of Yidden to Eretz Yisroel, the building of the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim, the end to evil and sin, a universal knowledge and worship of Hashem, universal peace and harmony, peace in the animal kingdom, an end to disease and death, the resurrection of the dead, and a generally easy life.
- » The sages looked forward to Moshiach so that they may be free of distraction to study Torah and pursue the knowledge of Hashem.
- » There is a dispute as to whether there will be miracles during the time of Moshiach. According to the Rebbe's explanation of the Rambam, there will be miracles only in the second phase of his coming.
- » Moshiach is human (of Dovidic descent) because his function is to fuse the spiritual and mundane realities, so he must be of this world, yet connected with Elokus.
- » The Rambam outlines a list of qualifications required of Messianic candidates as well as how will be able to tell

whether they are definitely Moshiach.

- » In every generation there is someone worthy to be Moshiach. Moshiach will only know it is him when the time is right. Many students identified their teachers as potential candidates to be Moshiach.
- » We hasten the coming of Moshiach with every good deed we perform, particularly by doing teshuvah, keeping Shabbos, giving tzedakah, studying Torah (more specifically the inner dimension of Torah (chassidus) and the Torah about Moshiach) and by demonstrating Jewish unity.