

LESSON EIGHT MESSIANISM

TEXT ONE --- **Mishnah Berakhot** 9:5; Talmud, **Berakhot** 63a

It is a time to work for the Lord, for they have violated Your teaching. (Ps. 119:126)
Rabbi Nathan says: (This means,) they have violated Your teaching because it is a time to work for the Lord.

Rava said: The first clause explains the second. Why is it *a time to work for the Lord*? Because *they have violated Your teaching*. And the second clause explains the first. Why have they *violated Your teaching*? Because *It is a time to work for the Lord*.

TEXT TWO --- **Mishnah Sotah** 9:15

On the heels of the Messiah, chutzpah (“brazenness”) will thrive and produce shall soar in price; the vine will yield its fruit but the wine will be costly; the idolaters will turn to heresy and there will be no one to rebuke them. The house of learning will be used for brothels. And Galilee will be devastated and Gavlan become desolate, and the people of the border will wander from town to town, and no one shall have mercy upon them. The wisdom of the Scribes shall be decadent, and those who fear sin will be loathed, and truth will be absent. The young will shame the elders, and elders will rise up before children; *The son spurns the father, daughter rises up against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law; a man’s own household are his enemies.* (Micah 7:6) The face of the generation is like the face of a dog, and the son will have no shame before his father. On whom shall we rely? On our Father in heaven.

TEXT THREE --- **Heikhalot** text (Synopsis, #218)

Tootruseah, the Lord, the God of Israel, desires and awaits (the mystic) inasmuch as he awaits the redemption and the time of salvation preserved for Israel after the destruction of the second, (the) last Temple.

When will he descend, he who descends to the **Merkavah**? When will he see the pride of the heights? When will he hear the ultimate salvation? When will he see

what no eye has seen? When will he (again) ascend and proclaim (this) to the seed of Abraham, his beloved?

TEXT FOUR --- Maftei'ach ha-Tokhechot, Abraham Abulafia, 13th c.

...the prophet is necessarily called **mashiach** because he is anointed with the supernal oil called 'the oil of anointing'...with which he utilizes the Names. Actually the mashiach must possess two qualities: one, that he first be anointed by God with wondrous prophecy and two, that he continue to be consecrated by God and people who will hail him as their great king of all times, *and he will rule from sea to sea* (Zech. 9:10). And this is all due to the great intensity of his **devekut** with the divine intellect and his reception of the power in a strong manner as it was with Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon. And the issue of **mashiach** will be known by everyone, and this is why there is no more need to announce the issue here, because he is destined to reveal himself shortly in our days.

TEXT FIVE --- Zohar I, 238a

He (Judah) binds to the vine his donkey, to a choice vine his ass's foal (Gen. 49:11). He is King Messiah, who is destined to rule over all forces of the nations, the forces appointed to rule over other, idolatrous nations, the potency through which they are empowered. King Messiah is destined to overpower them, for this vine rules over all those lower crowns through which the idolatrous nations have dominion. This one triumphs above; Israel (the *choice* vine) conquers and destroys other forces below. King Messiah will overpower them all, as it is written: *poor and riding on an ass, on a donkey* (Zech. 9:9). Donkey and ass are the two crowns through which the idolatrous nations rule from the left side, the side of impurity.

Why does it say *poor*? Is King Messiah to be called *poor*? But Rabbi Shimon said thus: (It is) because he has nothing of his own, and we call him King Messiah, the holy moon above, who has no light except from the sun. This King Messiah will have dominion, uniting with his site. Then, *See, your King is coming to you* (the preceding phrase in Zech. 9:9), unnamed. If below, he is *poor*, for he is in the aspect of the moon. If above, he is *poor* (in the sense of the) speculum which does

not shine, “bread of poverty.” But even so, *riding on an ass, on a donkey*, power of all the idolatrous nations, to be subjugated beneath him, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, will be empowered in His realm.

TEXT SIX --- “**Genizah** pages” on events from 1497-98

A. *From the time that the continual burnt offering is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days* (Dan. 12:11). This is the news of our redemption in this age: from the day the king of Portugal launched the attack in the palace of Os Estaos¹ against us and our children, when the continual burnt offering and the Torah were taken away from the people of Israel, the abomination of idolatry will last for 1,290 days and Zion and Sinai are to be desolate and also betrayed.

B. *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your domain, and the ends of the earth your possession* (Ps. 2:8). In this verse there is a hint that the first redemption destined...to come, with God’s help, will be at the ends of the earth, namely Portugal. God, praised be He, will take us out of there.

TEXT SEVEN --- Chayyim Vital, Sefer ha-Chezyonot; an entry from 1606.

12th of Kislev, Tuesday night...week of **Vayishlach** in which the battle between Jacob and Samael is found, as well as the matter of the chieftains of Esau...The portion from the prophets is the vision of Obadiah. I saw in my dream a large, high mountain... hewed and cut squarely from each of its four sides, like the walls of one square fortification. I ascended on the eastern wall, along the southeastern corner, and asked: Which city is this? I was told: This is Nineveh. Then they told me: This is the evil Rome...

I then saw that from the inside, on the eastern wall, there was a lance stuck in the wall, a very long one, and it was protruding towards the houses of the city, and it was situated halfway up the wall. There was a sword, upside-down, its edge down, stuck in the lance, its handle high above at the top of the wall, for the length of the sword was that of half the height of the wall. They told me: This sword is stuck in

this lance since the day the world was created until now, and no person has ever touched it. I looked at it and saw that it was a strong brass, unique, which can cut all sorts of iron as if it was dry straw. It had four edges on its four sides. At the point of the sword, there was something like the mouth of a snake, and they said that anyone struck by this sword will not recover.

I thought to myself: It is such a long time from the creation of the world until now; maybe the sword has become rusty. I looked at it and saw it was completely new. I took it in my hand. The emperor of Rome was told: That sword which no man has ever touched, is now in the hand of a certain Jew. The emperor then ordered to look for me and to kill me. When I was still on top of the wall, I threw the sword from my hand into the city and its tip stuck in the ground in one of the city's courtyards. I then escaped and hid in a cave in Rome where poor people lived, and I hid there until Saturday afternoon. Then I came out, and the emperor's servants found me and brought me to him.

He then ordered: "Remove everyone from here," and he and I remained alone. I said: "Why did you want to kill me? All of you go astray in your religion, like blind people, for the only true Torah is the Torah of Moses and no others are true." He said to me: "I knew all this; therefore, I sent for you, because I knew that there is no one as wise and knowledgeable as you are in the true wisdom. I want you to tell me secrets of the Torah and some of the Names of the Lord your God, praised be He, because I already realize the truth. Therefore do not be afraid that I sought you, for I truly love you." I then related to him some of this wisdom, and woke up.

TEXT EIGHT --- Nathan of Gaza, ~1665, attributed to a Rabbi Abraham of Germany in 13th c.

And I, Abraham, after having been shut up for forty years grieving over the power of the great dragon that lies in the midst of his rivers, (wondering) *How long until the end of these awful things?* (Dan. 12:6), when the voice of my beloved knocked: "Behold, a son shall be born to Mordecai Tzvi in the year 5386 (1626) and he will be called Sabbetai Tzvi. He will subdue the great dragon, and take away the strength of the piercing serpent and the strength of the crooked serpent, and he will be the true messiah. He will go forth to the war without hands (i.e., weapons) ...His kingdom will be forevermore and there is no redeemer for Israel besides him. Stand

on your feet and hear the power of this man, though he be poor and lean. He is my beloved, the apple of my eye and my very heart...and he shall sit on my throne, for *the hand is the throne of God* (Exod. 17:6).”

And I was still wondering at this vision, and behold, a man stood before me, with appearance like that of polished brass from his loins downward, and he had the brightness of fire all about him. And from his loins upward he appeared like bdellium and like the body of heaven in its clearness. He called mightily: “Loose the knots (of the demonic powers) and make war, and prepare a refuge for there is no provision.” And a deep sleep fell on me, and lo, a horror of great darkness in all the land of Egypt. And there came a ferret and a chameleon and brought forth a great light, the light of the hiding of his power. And behold, there was a man, his size was one square cubit, his beard a cubit long and his penis a cubit and a span. He held a hammer in his hand and tore up a great mountain of ten times sixscore thousand. And the man went up the mountain, and there was a pit down to the bottom of the mountain, and he fell in. And he (the man resembling polished brass) said to me: “Do not grieve, for you shall see the power of this man.” But I could no longer restrain my grief, and I fell into a deep sleep and saw no more vision for a month until the awesome man came again and said to me: “My son, how great is your strength, since I reveal to you things unknown even to the angels. And now, write the vision and conceal it in an earthen vessel, so it may continue many days. Know that the man of whom I have spoken shall strive hard to know the faith of heaven, and Habakkuk prophesied concerning him, *the just shall live by his faith* (2:4), because for a long season Israel will serve without the true God, but he shall restore the crown to its pristine glory. His contemporaries shall rise against him with reproaches and blasphemies; they are the *mixed multitude* (Ex. 12:38), the sons of Lilith, the *membrane above the liver*, the leaders and rabbis of the generation. He will do wondrous and awesome things, and he will give himself up to martyrdom to perform the will of his Creator.”

TEXT NINE --- from a letter of Rabbi Israel, the Ba'al Shem Tov, to his brother-in-law, ~1751.

... I went higher, step by step, until I entered the palace of the Messiah in which the Messiah studies the Torah together with all the **tannaim** and the saints and also the seven shepherds. There I witnessed great rejoicing and could not fathom the reason

for it, so I thought that, God forbid, the rejoicing was over my own departure from this world. But I was afterwards informed that I was not yet to die since they took great delight on high when, through their Torah, I perform unifications here below. To this day I am unaware of the reason for that rejoicing.

I asked the Messiah: “When will the Master (i.e., the Messiah) come?” And he replied, “You will know of it in this way: it will be when your teaching becomes famous and revealed to the world... and when what I have taught you and you have comprehended will spread so that others, too, will be capable of performing **yichudim** (unifications) and having soul ascents as you do. Then will all the **kelippot** be consumed and it will be a time of grace and salvation.” I was astonished to hear this and greatly distressed that it would take such a long time, for when will such a thing be possible? Yet my mind was set at rest in that I learned there three special charms (**seggulot**) and three holy Names and these are easy to grasp and to expound, so I thought to myself, it is possible by this means for all my colleagues to attain to the stages and categories to which I have attained, that is to say, they too will be able to engage in ascents of the soul and learn to comprehend as I have done. But no permission was given to me to reveal this secret for the rest of my life.

TEXT TEN --- Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl, Me’or Eynayim (“The Light of the Eyes”), *Parshat Pinchas*, 91b

A teaching of the Ba’al Shem Tov: Every Jew must rectify and enhance the aspect of the full stature of the Messiah that is related to his own individual soul. As is known, the name Adam (**a-d-m**) is the acronym of Adam, David, Messiah. This is so because Adam’s full stature extended from one end of the world to the other. All Jewish souls are encompassed within the full stature of Adam, the first man. Afterwards, because of the sin, his full stature was diminished. Similarly, the Messiah will possess the full stature of all Jewish souls, encompassing six hundred thousand souls as it was before Adam’s sin. Therefore every individual Jew must endeavor to enhance the aspect of the Messiah that is related to his soul, so that the entire stature is rectified and established. Then there will be an unending and general unity (of souls). May it happen speedily and in our days.

TEXT ELEVEN --- Jacob Isaac of Przysucha, the “**Yehudi**” (d. 1814); **Nifla’ot ha-Yehudi**, p. 58a.

The difference between the **tzaddikim** of any generation and the Messiah, is that every **tzaddik** spends each day in the service of God according to his level of attainment. And on the morrow he adds to the preceding day’s achievement. And so it goes; each day, he adds a little more. But with a **tzaddik** who is the Messiah, it is different. He too must add a little more from the preceding day’s accomplishments; however, over the night, everything he had achieved is erased, taken from him, so that on the next day he must start all over again from the very beginning.

TEXT TWELVE --- Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, **Chayyei Moharan**, 1:6

“There are seventy nations, divided between the domains of Esau and Ishmael (i.e., Christendom and Islam). Each of these domains is composed of thirty-five kingdoms, and they will be conquered in the future by the two messiahs, Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David. And there is one tzaddik in whom these two messiahs are combined.” He said several other things there, more than have been printed. At that point the table broke, because so many people were pressing around him. He became harsh and said: “Are there gentiles sitting around my table? Are these then messianic times, that gentiles should approach the tzaddikim, as in *All the nations shall flow unto him* (Is. 2:2)?”

TEXT THIRTEEN --- Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook (20th c. Israel)

The true redemption, which is to be manifested in the complete resettlement in the land and the revival of Israel in it, is thus seen to be a continuation of renewed settlement in the land, accompanied by the ingathering of the captive exiles within its boundaries...Hence, when this state of ours is in full control, both internally and externally, then the fulfillment of this **mitzvah** of the inheritance can be truly revealed--the **mitzvah** which is the basis and essence of all **mitzvot** that, by means of our role, can accomplish the act of redemption.

¹ Where forced conversions took place in 1497.