

Class #2: Foundations of Torah, Principals of Faith, and Moshiach (the Messiah)

The material for Lesson #5 is mostly excerpts from the book "Highlights of Moshiach," by Rabbi Abraham Stone, published and copyright by Sichos In English. Comments inserted by the Director of Asknoah.org are placed in square brackets.

Since these lessons follow the convention for mundane speech, the One True G-d is referred by the Hebrew word "HaShem" (literally translated as "The Name").

[The coming of Moshiach is one of the 13 Principles of Jewish Faith set forth by Rambam in his Commentary on the Mishnah. Today, *everyone* should show and demonstrate full trust in the coming of the true Righteous Moshiach, without the slightest doubt. Our faith in this obvious fact will hasten his coming.]

Moshiach Before Eliyahu

There is a tradition that Eliyahu (Elijah the Prophet) will come before Moshiach, to inform the world of the advent of Moshiach. Is this ... a mandatory pre-requisite for Moshiach? The Talmud relates:[1]

Once, Rabbi Joshua [made a visit to the Heavenly realm and] met [the soul of] Moshiach and asked him: "When are you going to come?" Moshiach replied: "Today!"

Rabbi Joshua then met Eliyahu, who asked him: "What did he (Moshiach) tell you?" Said Rabbi Joshua: "He lied to me, for he told me that he is coming today, but he didn't come!"

Said Eliyahu: "He didn't lie, but this is what he really meant: He will come 'Today, if you hearken to the voice of G-d.'" [2]

Maharsha explains that if Moshiach comes today, we assume that Eliyahu came yesterday.

Another explanation is that if we merit, and Moshiach comes sooner (before the appointed time), he may then come on his own before the revelation of Eliyahu. This is presented in *Krayti U'playti* (by Rabbi Yonason Eibenschutz):[3]

Rambam posits[4] that it is not a certainty that Eliyahu must come before Moshiach. Although some Sages maintain that before the advent of Moshiach, Eliyahu will appear, ... there is no definite basis for this.

This poses a difficulty, inasmuch as the Talmud states[5] that Eliyahu will come first, and as is seen in Tanach [the Hebrew Bible],[6] "Behold I send unto you Eliyahu the prophet [before the coming of the great and awesome day of the L-rd]." How do we reconcile these two statements regarding the coming of Eliyahu?

The answer is seen in the timing of Moshiach, as the Talmud [7a] cites the verse:[7b] "In its time will I hasten it" - If Jews do not [have sufficient] merit, Moshiach will come in his appointed time; but if they [have enough] merit, then Moshiach will come sooner, in haste.

Rambam holds that there is an order to the coming of Moshiach, that Eliyahu comes first to foretell of his coming. This, however, is effective only when Moshiach comes in his appointed time. But [if] the redemption is hastened, as expressed in,[8] "He is leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills," G-d changes the order [of the two events].

Footnotes:

1. Tractate *Sanhedrin* 98a, Rashi
2. Psalms 95:7
3. *Yoreh Deah* 110, *Bais Hasafek*/end
4. Laws of Kings 12:2
5. Tractate *Eiruv* 13b
6. Malachi 3:23
- 7a. Tractate *Sanhedrin* 98a
- 7b. Isaiah 60:22
8. Song of Songs 2:8

Details Of Moshiach's Identity (Quotes from Rambam[9])

"A King will arise":

Apparently, the King Moshiach will not be appointed by a [Sanhedrin] *Beit Din* of 70 [sages] and a prophet, as is required for every [other Jewish] king.[10] This is seen in Rambam's historical proof[11] that Rabbi Akiva referred to Bar Kochba as the [presumed] King Moshiach - although there was no prophet at that time.

"He will delve into Torah...":

[Moshiach will delve into Torah] until it becomes his Torah, part and parcel of himself.

"just like King David his father":

This means that Torah study should be in a manner of accepting the yoke of Torah. And the observance of mitzvot should be preceded by the yoke of *teshuvah* [repentance], as in the familiar phrase: "*Teshuvah* and good deeds." This pattern was established by King David, as the Talmud [12] comments on the verse in Tanach [the Hebrew Bible]:[13]

"These are the words of David, and these are the words of the man who was raised on high (*al*)" - These are the words of David who established "*ula*," [referring to] "the yoke (*ol*) of *teshuvah*" which uplifts the person to the greatest heights and closeness to G-d.

Midrash Shmuel notes: "David accepted and carried the yoke of Torah together with the yoke of kingship."

"Moshiach will study Torah according to the Written Torah and the Oral Torah":

Why does Rambam add these words? This follows the end of Halachah 3 (in uncensored editions): "Whoever adds to or deletes from Torah, or interprets Torah incorrectly, taking mitzvot out of their literal context, he is certainly an evildoer and a heretic." [This statement of Torah law negates any belief that Yeshu ("J.") could be the Messiah.]

"He will coerce all Jews":

This is linked with the rectification for the destruction of the Holy Temple, as the Talmud relates[14]:

Jerusalem was destroyed because the people did not admonish each other. Rather, the Jews in that generation ... didn't admonish those who sinned and deviated from a Torah life.

"to go in the path [of Torah] and to strengthen the weakness [in observance of some parts of Torah]":

[Allegorically,] "to go in its path" is directed to those who didn't sin, i.e. the tzaddikim, and "to strengthen its weakness" [is directed] to those who transgressed and repented - i.e. "baalei teshuvah."

"and he will build the Beis Hamikdash":

As the Midrash notes,[15] Moshiach will build the Beis Hamikdash:

"When the King Moshiach who is in the north will arise, he will come and build the Beis Hamikdash which is situated in the south"[16] (i.e. the south part of the Temple Mount).

Rashi and Tosfos, however, maintain that the Beis Hamikdash will come down from Heaven, as they state:[17] The Third Beis Hamikdash which we eagerly await is already built and furnished; it will be revealed and come from Heaven, as is written,[18] "Your Sanctuary, O G-d, which Your hands have established."

This is also underscored in *Tanchuma*: [19] G-d swore that He himself will rebuild it, as is written, [15] "G-d builds Jerusalem."

"the Beis Hamikdash in its place:"

Although, in general, only the [Temple's outer] Altar can never be changed from its place,[21] yet, the whole Temple of the future must be in its original place, as specified in Ezekiel. Also, this will determine who Moshiach really is, by [his] showing the precise [location of the] site of the Beis Hamikdash.

"And he will bring the ingathering of Jews" [afterwards], as Rashi states:[22] First "G-d will build Jerusalem" - then "He will gather the ingathering of all Jews."

Notes:

9. Rambam, Laws of Kings 11:4

10. Ibid. 1:3

11. Ibid. 11:3

12. Tractate *Avodah Zorah* 5a

13. Samuel II 23:1

14. Tractate *Shabbos* 119b

15. Leviticus Rabbah 9:6

16. Isaiah 41:25

17. Tractate *Sukkah* 41a

18. Shemot (Exodus) 15:17

19. *Parshas Noach* 11 (on Genesis, Chapter 11)

20. Psalms 147:2

21. Rambam, Laws of the Holy Temple [Hilchos Beit Habechirah] 2:1

22. Tractate *Berachos* 49a

Moshiach Will Build The Beis Hamikdash (Holy Temple)

We find two contrasting viewpoints regarding the rebuilding of the Third Holy Temple. Rashi and Tosfos state that the Third Holy Temple will be revealed and sent down from Heaven - completely built and furnished,[23] whereas Rambam maintains that Moshiach will build the Holy Temple.[24] How do we reconcile these diverse opinions?

In *Eichah* [Lamentations] it is written,[25] "Sunk into the ground are her gates." The Midrash notes:[26] The gates of the Holy Temple were concealed [below their place,] underground.

On this verse, the Talmud remarks:[26] David (and Moses) merited that the enemies did not have full control of the edifices they built. For, with reference to David it states, "Sunk into the ground are her gates."

Torah Temimah asks, how is the Beis Hamikdash and its gates attributed to David, when he didn't even build it, but his son, King Solomon, built it? But the Talmud states,[28] since David exerted utmost effort and self-sacrifice to find the appropriate site for the Holy Temple [and plan its design and gather its materials] - it is therefore called by his name.

The reason why the gates remained intact is seen in the Midrash:[29]

The gates gave honor to the holy Ark... it wasn't possible for the Ark to fit through the gates [with its staves]. At that time, King Solomon called out,[30] "Raise your heads, O gates, and let the King of glory enter," alluding to the Holy Ark and the Tablets therein. In response to Solomon's plea, the gates uplifted themselves and permitted the Ark to enter. For this reason, the enemy [Babylonian] forces did not destroy the gates but they sank (intact) into the ground.

In light of the above, it seems that the Holy Temple itself will come down from Heaven. Its gates, however, which sank into the ground, will rise up - and Moshiach will fasten them to their place. The rule is that, in the process of building, the one who puts up the doors or gates is considered as having built the entire edifice.[31]

Notes:

23. Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate *Megillah* 1:11

24. Rambam, *Hilchos Melachim* (Laws of Kings) 11:1,4

25. Lamentations 2:9

26. Numbers Rabbah 15:13; Lamentations Rabbah 2:13

27. Tractate *Sota* 9a

28. Tractate *Zevachim* 54b

29. Exodus Rabbah 8:1

30. Psalms 24:7

31. Tractate Bava Batra 53b

Link Between Moshiach And Moses

Our Sages state:[32] "Moses was the first Redeemer and he is the final Redeemer."

This does not mean that Moses himself will be the final Redeemer, since Moses is a Levite, whereas Moshiach will come from the family of King David - from the Tribe of Judah.[33] What, then, does this Midrashic statement mean? Rather, our Sages teach us that through the power of Moses, who was the first Redeemer, shall come Moshiach - the final Redeemer.

The major qualification of Moshiach is assiduous Torah study. Thus, his power and merit to redeem all Jews is through Torah, which is called [34] "the Torah of Moses" and as G-d told him:[35] "Since you are humble it shall be called upon your name." Likewise, the power of Jews to bring the final redemption today is through increased Torah study and its observance.

In the numerical sense, we also find the connection between Moshiach and Moses, as is written[36], "until Shiloh arrives".

[The full verse states, "The scepter (i.e. kinship) shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh arrives, and his shall be an assembly of nations." This prophecy by Jacob states that the true kingship of the Jewish nation will be with the Tribe of Judah "*until Shiloh arrives.*" "Shiloh" refers to Moshiach, who will be from the Tribe of Judah, and descended from King David.]

The Hebrew words "*yavo Shiloh*" are the numerical value of "Moshiach," and "*Shiloh*" is the numerical value of "Moshe" (Moses). [37]

This teaches us that the merit and power for bringing Moshiach is dependent upon the [eternal ideals] of Moses [which are Torah learning and observance of the Torah's commandments (613 commandments for the Children of Israel, and 7 commandments for the Children of Noah).]

Notes:

32. Exodus Rabbah 2:4

33. Rambam, *Hilchos Melachim* (Laws of Kings) 11:4

34. Malachi 3:22

35. Tractate *Shabbos* 89a

36. Genesis 49:10

37. Baal HaTurim, Genesis *ibid.*