

***Klal Yisroel has to Merit the Mashiach
BEFORE HaShem will send Eliyahu HaNavi
To reveal the identity of His End of Day's Messenger, Part I***

The Rambam states in his Seventh Principle, “But Moshe Rabbeinu, whenever he desired [he could speak with HaShem (*Shemos* 33:11), “*face to face [directly], as a man will speak to his friend,*”], [as] he {Moshe} said (*Bamidbar* 9:8), “*Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you.*” There is a caveat, though, that must be noted concerning the prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu.

There was a thirty-eight year lacuna during which the quality of Moshe’s prophecy was hampered because of the actions of his students – beginning with the Sin of the Golden Calf, being sealed at the Sin of the Spies, and only ending after that generation had died in the desert. We have collected the Source Torah material regarding this period of time:

Rashi, *Shemos* 32:7 “**Go, descend** ... Descend from your high position. I gave you this high position only for their sake ... [But now that they have sinned with the Golden Calf (B’rachos 32a)...]”

B’rachos 32a “**And the Lord spoke unto Moses, Go, get thee down** [*Shemos* 32:7]. What is meant by ‘Go, get thee down’? R. Eleazar said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, descend from thy greatness. **Have I at all given to you greatness save for the sake of Israel?** And now Israel has sinned; then why do I want thee?”

Meshach Chachmah on Rashi, *Bamidbar* 13:30: “[Some explain that] because the people heard from Eldad and Madad¹ that Moshe would die and Yehoshua would be the one to bring them into the land, and they saw that Moshe did not rebuke them [Eldad and Madad] for saying so, therefore they [the people] were afraid, “How is it possible to enter this fortified land, and to fight with Amalek (with whom they had already stumbled once), and the with giants without Moshe? Would they not all fall by the sword?” Therefore, Caleb silenced the people for attributing all of the wonders to Moshe². On the contrary, he [Caleb] argued, **the greatness of Moshe is dependent upon you**. As we see that all the time that they were excommunicated in the desert, HaShem did not speak to Moshe. Therefore, he said, ***Let’s go up on our own, without Moshe, because Moshe is not the reason that HaShem leads us in a miraculous way. Rather, the Jewish nation itself is worthy of personal Divine Guidance***, which is what Yehoshua said (Yehoshua, *Perek Gimmel*), “With this you will know that the Living G-d is in your midst.” Meaning that **you should not think that Moshe was in your midst, and that he did all of the great things, but is was only G-d, Who lives forever, and not Moshe who has already died**. But G-d lives forever, and He is able to drive out the nations before you.

Bamidbar 12:8 “**With him I speak mouth to mouth, manifestly, and not in dark speech...**”

Bamidbar 14:35 “**I the Lord have said, I will surely do it to all this evil congregation, who are gathered together against me; in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.**”

***** **Thirty-eight Year Lacuna** *****

Parashas Chukas, Bamidbar 20:1-2 “Then came the people of Israel, the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month; and the people abode in Kadesh; and ***Miriam died there, and was buried there***. And there was no water for the congregation; and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron...”

¹ It should be noted that a negative prophecy does not – necessarily – have to come true. *T’shuvah* by Moshe (or, in our estimation, *t’shuvah* by the people so that they would have a proper *hashkafah* regarding Moshe as a messenger only) could (might) have allowed Moshe to enter the land...

² “*Vayahas Caliev el Moshe*” – The words of our *passuk* fit perfectly with the Meshach Chochmah’s understanding, that Caleb is chastising the people for being too dependent upon Moshe, and for attributing the wondrous miracle to Moshe rather than to HaShem. “***We don’t need Moshe. Our success is dependent upon HaShem.***”

Rashi (Bamidbar 20:1) teaches us that Miriam – then Aaron, and lastly Moshe – were the last of the generation who departed Egypt to die. And it was then that HaShem ended the thirty-eight year lacuna, and He began to speak to Moshe again (cf. *Bamidbar* 12:8 “*With him I speak mouth to mouth*”). The following pieces of Torah confirm that HaShem did end the period of “silence”:

Devarim 2:14-17 “And the time from our leaving Kadesh-Barnea, until we came over the brook Zered, was **thirty eight years**; until all the generation of the men of war had perished from the camp, as the Lord swore to them. For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from the camp, until they had perished. So **it came to pass, when all the men of war had perished and died from among the people**, That the Lord spoke to me, saying,”

Rashi, *Devarim* 2:17 “**that the Lord spoke to me** . . . But since the spies were sent until now, the word [denoting God’s speaking to Moses with endearment] is not mentioned in [this] section, only that word [denoting a less endearing form of communication], to teach us that during those entire thirty-eight years during which time the Israelites were under ban by God, the Divine speech was not directed towards him in an expression of affection, face to face, and with peace of mind—to teach us that the Divine Presence rests upon the prophets only for Israel’s sake.”

Ta’anis 30b “Rabbah b. Bar Chanah said in the name of R. Yochanan: It is the day on which the generation of the wilderness ceased to die out. For a Master said: So long as the generation of the wilderness [the generation that came out of Egypt] continued to die out there was no divine communication to Moses, as it is said, **So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead . . . that the Lord spoke to me** [*Devarim* 2:16-17]. [Only then] came the divine communication ‘unto me’.”

Bava Basra 121a/b “R. Dimi b. Yoseph said in the name of R. Nachman: [It was] the day on which the dying in the wilderness had ceased [*Bamidbar* 14:35 was its beginning]; for a Master said: Before the dying in the wilderness had ceased there was no [divine] communication with Moses; for it is said, **So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people, that the Lord spoke unto me saying**, [‘only then’, said Moses] ‘was there speaking to me’.”

But despite having Moshe Rabbeinu teaching them for the entire thirty-eight year period, the children of those who were sentenced to die in the desert made a mistake similar to that of the Golden Calf when Miriam died and the Well of Miriam dried up (Rashi, *Bamidbar* 20:2). Who did they turn to for water? Moshe. Who should they have turned to? HaShem, the Source of all of their sustenance in the desert. It was then that Moshe’s fate was sealed (*Bamidbar* 20:12) “**...Because you did not believe me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the people of Israel**, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” (Cf. Meshach Chachmah *Devarim* 4:15)

Thus we see that the bookends to the thirty-eight year lacuna, in fact the central issue of the forty years in the desert, was the over-emphasis on Moshe as necessary in HaShem’s miraculous doings. At the beginning of the thirty-eight years the Meshach Chachmah (*Bamidbar* 13:30) explains to us “**the greatness of Moshe is dependent upon you** [the *B’nei Yisroel*];” and at the end of the lacuna Rashi teaches (*Devarim* 2:17) “**the Divine Presence rests upon the prophets only for Israel’s sake.**” The lesson being that we have to warrant a Prophet of the level of Moshe; we have to re-attain that level before we will be worthy of a messenger like the Mashiach.

***Klal Yisroel* has to Merit the Mashiach
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To reveal the identity of His End of Day's Messenger, Part II**

The very first *Tehillim* we say to usher in the *Shabbos* teaches us all that we have to know in order to return to HaShem, listen to His Voice, and gain our Redemption:

Tehillim 95:1-11 (*Kabbalas Shabbos*), “O come, let us ***sing to the Lord***; let us make a joyful noise to ***the Rock of our Salvation***. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise to Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His Hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the mountains are also His. ***The sea is His, and He made it***; and His Hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His Hand. ***Even today, if you will only listen to His Voice!*** Do not harden your hearts, like you did at *Merivah*, and like you did in the day of *Massah* in the wilderness; When ***your fathers tempted Me, and tested Me, even though they had seen My Deeds***. For forty years I loathed that generation, and said, ***They are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My Ways. Therefore I swore in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest.***”

“...let us ***sing to the Lord ... the Rock of our Salvation ...***” Like at the Song at the Sea when all of the praise, exaltation and credit were given to Him to Whom it belongs.

“...***The sea is His, and He made it ...***” Consider the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 21:6) “***AND LIFT THOU UP THY ROD*** (*Shemos* 14:15). Moses said to the Holy One, blessed be He, 'You command me to divide the sea and to convert it into dry ground; but have You not written, ***'Who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea'*** (*Yirmiyahu* 5:22), and have You not sworn that You will never divide it?' ... Moses asked God: 'Did You not promise that the sea would not be changed into dry land, for it says, ***"Who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea"***? And does it not say, ***'Or Who shut up the sea with doors*** (*Iyov* 38:8)?' The Divine reply was, 'You have not read the Torah from the beginning, where it is written, ***'And God said: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together*** (*Bereshis* 1:9). It was I who made a condition at the very beginning that I would one day divide it [Referring: ***Let the waters... be gathered together... and let the dry land appear to one day in the future, when I will require it.***]; for it says, ***And the sea returned to its strength*** (*le'ethano*) [*The unusual word le'ethano is now connected with the word lithenao, 'in accordance with its condition'* (on which it was created), viz. that it would divide itself to allow Israel to pass through] ***when the morning appeared*** (*Shemos* 14:27), that is, in accordance with the condition which I made with it at its creation...”³

³ The Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 21:6) continues, “...Moses immediately listen to G-d and went to divide the sea, but the sea refused to comply, exclaiming, ***'What, before you shall I divide? Am I not greater than you? For I was created in the third day and you [mankind] on the sixth.'*** When Moses heard this, he went and reported to G-d, 'The sea refuses to be divided.' What did God do? ***He placed His Right Hand upon the right hand of Moses***, as it says, ***'That caused His Glorious Arm to go at the right hand of Moses, that divided the water before them*** (*Yishayahu* 63:12). When [the sea] beheld G-d, it fled, as it says, ***'The sea saw it, and fled'*** (*Tehillim* 114:3). What did it see? It saw God's Right Hand placed upon Moses, and it could no longer delay, but fled at once. Moses asked of it, ***'Wherefore do you flee?'*** ***The sea replied, 'At the presence of the God of Jacob*** (*Tehillim* 114:7), because of the fear of the Holy One, blessed be He.' Thereupon as soon as Moses raised his hand [representative of HaShem's Hand] over the sea, it divided itself, for it says, ***'And the waters were divided*** (*Shemos* 14:21). ... All these miracles were performed [*“presented;”* cf. Ramban, *Devarim* 34:10-12] by Moses, for it says, ***And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea*** (*Shemos* 14:21). It is for this reason that G-d praised him, as it says, ***Then His people remembered the days of old, the days of Moses*** (*Yishayahu* 63:11), and also ***'That caused His Glorious Arm to go at the right hand of Moses'*** (*Yishayahu* 63:12).”

“...***What, before you shall I divide? ...***” The Midrash is teaching us that water cannot be divided by flesh and blood, and for Moshe [or any one for that matter] can stand all day long with an outstretched staff and a upraised

“...He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His Hand. *Even today, if you will only listen to His Voice! ...*” *Tehillim* 23:1-2 “...*The Lord is my Shepherd ... He makes me lie down in green pastures...*” *Sanhedrin* 98a “...It is written, *in its time*, while it is also written, *I will hasten it!* (*Yishayahu* 60:22 “...*I the Lord will hasten it in its time...*”) – if they [*Klal Yisroel*] are worthy, I [the Lord] will hasten it [the Redemption]: if not, [the Redemption will happen] at the due time ...” *Makkos* 24a “(Shemos 20:2-3) “*I am the Lord your God, Who has brought you out of the land of Egypt ... You shall have no other gods before Me,*” we heard from the mouth of HaShem.”

“...*Do not harden your hearts, like you did at Merivah, and like you did in the day of Massah in the wilderness ...*” *Merivah* and *Massah* serve as two additional bookends, one just after the exodus from Egypt, the other after the death of Miriam “...*even though they had seen My Deeds,*” we still gave some of the credit to Moshe for His wondrous works.

Thus “...For forty years I loathed that generation ... *Therefore I swore in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest.*” The generation that left Egypt did not enter the Land; Moshe, because of their children, was also precluded from entering the Land. Are we still in exile because we still have not sufficiently differentiated between HaShem and His messenger, the Mashiach?

In our *Davening* every day we read (*Yishayahu* 59:20) “And a redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those in *Ya’akov* who turn from transgression...” The Rambam (*Hilchos T’shuvah* 7:5) reads, “**All the prophets commanded [the people] to repent. Israel will only be redeemed through T’shuvah ... [U]ltimately, Israel will repent towards the end of her exile, and, immediately⁴, she will be redeemed as (*Devarim* 30:1-3) states, ‘There will come a time when ... you will return to G-d, your Lord ... [and] G-d, your Lord, will bring back your captivity ... He will once again gather you from among the nations...’”**

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 97b/98a) reads, “Rav said, “**All the predestined dates [for redemption] have passed** ... R. Eliezer said, “If Israel repent, they will be redeemed; if not, they will not be redeemed.” R. Joshua said to him, “**If they do not repent, will they not be redeemed! But the Holy One, blessed be He, will set up a king over them, whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman’s, whereby Israel shall engage in repentance, and He will thus bring them back to the right path.**” Another [*Baraitha*] taught: R. Eliezer said, “If Israel repent, they will be redeemed, as it is written (*Yirmiyahu* 3:22), ‘Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.’”

Thus the Gemara is teaching us that the only reason we may have to go through the Birth-Pains of the Redemption is to get us to turn to HaShem. But while those “Birth-Pains” are not a necessity, turning to HaShem is. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 98a) reads, “...R. Alexandri said: R. Yehoshua opposed two verses: it is written, And **behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven** (*Daniel* 7:13), while [elsewhere] it is written, [**behold, thy king cometh unto thee . . .] lowly, and riding upon an ass!** (*Zechariah* 9:9) – if they [*Klal Yisroel*] are meritorious, [the Redemption, ushered in by HaShem⁵, will

arm and not even a puddle will be divided. This is confirmed by Moshe, that he was inadequate for the task, “**He [Moshe] went and reported to G-d, ‘The sea refuses to be divided.’**”

“...**He placed His Right Hand upon the right hand of Moses** ...” The Midrash teaches us that it was not Moshe’s hand that the people could see, but rather the *Yad HaShem* that the people could not see that was responsible for the splitting of the sea. Moshe’s hand served merely as a symbol of HaShem’s Hand. The *passuk* from *Tehillim* confirms the teaching, “**Wherefore do you flee?**” *The sea replied, ‘At the presence of the God of Jacob* (*Tehillim* 114:7), as well as the *passuk* from our *Navi*, “**That caused His Glorious Arm to go at the right hand of Moses, that divided the water before them** (*Yishayahu* 63:12).”

⁴ *Yom*, Thursday (*Tehillim* 81:14-15) “Oh that My people would listen to Me, and that Israel would walk in My ways! [*Shemos* 20:2-3, the first two commandments!] In an instant I would subdue their enemies, and turn my hand against their adversaries.”

⁵ Regarding *Daniel* 7:13 “...**one like the son of man...**” is referring to HaShem’s swift “appearance” to startle the world into recognizing Him and the purveyors of His Torah, *Klal Yisroel*. Consider *Yishayahu* 6:1 “In the year that king Uzziah died **I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne**, high and lifted up, and His train filled the Temple,” or *Yechezkel* 1:26, 28 “26. And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne,

come] with the clouds of heaven; [‘*Swiftly*’ (Rashi)] if not, [the Mashiach will “arrive”] lowly and riding upon an ass [and we will have already gone through the Birth-Pains and have had to suffer through the War of Gog and MaGog as well as the death of Mashiach Ben Yosef⁶]. . .”

in appearance like lapis lazuli; and *upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness like the appearance of a man upon it* . . . This was *the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord*. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one speaking.” This understanding fits nicely with our *chiddush* on Sanhedrin 99a and the “dispute” between R. Hillel and R. Yosef. Please continue reading above.

⁶ The Gemara (*Megillah* 17b) reads, “...And whence that we say the blessing of mighty deeds? Because it says, *Ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength* (*Tehillim* 29:1). And whence that we say sanctifications? Because it says, *Ascribe unto the Lord the glory due unto His name, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness* (*Tehillim* 29:2). What reason had they for mentioning understanding after holiness? Because it says, *They shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and shall stand in awe of the God of Israel* (*Yishayahu* 29:23f.), and next to this, *They also that err in spirit shall come to understanding*. What reason had they for mentioning repentance after understanding? Because it is written, *Lest they, understanding with their heart, return and be healed* (*Yishayahu* 6:10). If that is the reason, healing should be mentioned next to repentance? — Do not imagine such a thing, since it is written, *And let him return unto the Lord and He will have compassion upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon* (*Yishayahu* 55:7). But why should you rely upon this verse? Rely rather on the other! — There is written another verse, *Who forgives all your iniquity, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from the pit* (*Tehillim* 103:3f.), which implies that redemption and healing come after forgiveness. But it is written, *‘Lest they return and be healed’*? That refers not to the healing of sickness but to the healing [power] of forgiveness. What was their reason for mentioning redemption in the seventh blessing? [Concluding, *‘Blessed art thou, O Lord, who redeems Israel’*.] Raba replied: Because *they [Israel] are destined to be redeemed in the seventh year [of the coming of the Messiah]*, [See Sanhedrin 97a] therefore the mention of redemption was placed in the seventh blessing. But a Master has said, *‘In the sixth year will be thunderings, in the seventh wars, at the end of the seventh the son of David will come’*? — War is also the beginning of redemption.”

Cf. The unnecessary Death of Mashiach Ben Yosef ... Zechariah 12:10 ... Sotah 52a ...
The death of the *yetzer hara* for *shittuf* (making partners with HaShem). (See our *chiddush* on this in Part IV.)

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 10b/11a) which reads, “It has been taught: R. Eliezer says ... in Nisan they [the *B’nei Yisroel*] were redeemed and in Nisan they will be redeemed in the time to come ... R. Joshua says ... in Nisan they will be redeemed in time to come.”

Two differing times when Mashiach Ben David will “arrive,” coincides with the two differing visions of how the Redemption will unfold. If we merit it, then Mashiach Ben Yosef will not have to die and the redemption will be the glorious one foretold in Daniel 7. But if we fail to get our own act together, then we will have to undergo the birth-pains, the death of Mashiach Ben Yosef, and the Redemption will be muted, as depicted in Zechariah 9.

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To reveal the identity of His End of Day's Messenger, Part III**

Please continue, dear reader, with an explanation of a Gemara that is troublesome at best – at least until now:

Sanhedrin 99a reads “R. Hillel [not Hillel the Elder, rather a descendant, a grandson of Rebbe] said: *There shall be no Messiah for Israel⁷, 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 salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.* [Zechariah 9:9]”

Note: Another Messianic prophecy that we have already encountered above in Sanhedrin 98a: **Daniel 7:13.** I saw in the night visions, and, behold, **one like a son of man⁸ came with the clouds of heaven⁹**, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him. 14. And there he was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Cf. Hilchos melachim 4:10, the Mashiach will be a teacher *par excellence!*)

When examining the text in Sanhedrin 99a we are presented with a curious piece of Gemara. We seem to have three choices:

1) R' Hillel was unaware of the texts in Zechariah [or any of the many other prophecies in *Tanakh* that promise us that the throne of David will not remain empty forever], and R' Yosef is stepping in to prove that there will be a *Mashiach* based upon the text in Zechariah; or:

2) R' Hillel knows of the text in Zechariah, but is unaware of the timeframe of the prophecy; thus R' Yosef needed to come to the rescue of the *Mashiach* by stressing when the prophecy of Zechariah occurred; or:

3) R' Hillel knew of both the prophecy and the timeframe, yet discounts the prophecy just the same; again, R' Yosef felt the need to point out the inaccuracy of Hillel's position.

Each of these understandings seems to have their own problems. If the first is the correct understanding, how could a sage with the stature of R' Hillel have been unaware of the prophecy in Zechariah? And if the second is correct, how could R' Hillel have been mistaken about the timeframe of Zechariah's prophecies? And if the third is correct, how could R' Hillel have been aware of both the prophecy and the time during which it occurred, but discount the prophecy? Either way, attempts to make sense of this Gemara seem fraught with difficulties. Was R' Hillel unaware that HaShem promised us through His prophets that there would be a king sitting on David's throne one day? Did R' Yosef actually believe that his Talmudic colleague was unaware of what Zechariah had prophesied? Or, perhaps, there is another way to understand this Talmudic exchange. Perhaps we can understand this Gemara in a way that will reveal the sullen conclusion that R' Hillel had come to regarding the End of days (*Yemos HaMashiach*), while at the same time learning a valuable lesson from the way that R' Yosef reacts to his colleague's statement.

⁷ [But the Almighty will Himself redeem Israel and reign over them (Rashi).]

⁸ **Rashi:** This is the king *Mashiach*.

⁹ “With the clouds of heaven (i.e. suddenly and swiftly)” – this would be a glorious Redemption.

According to *Chazal* (Sanhedrin 98a), there are two possible beginnings to *Yemos HaMashiach*, one glorious – as depicted in Daniel 7, the other muted with humility – as presented in Zechariah (both of these *Navi'im* prophesied after the destruction of the First Temple, after the days of *Chizkiyahu HaMelech*, and thus would seemingly be appropriate to “disprove” the statement of Rabbi Hillel). The key to the Redemption has always been one thing: *t'shuvah* (Rambam, *Hilchos T'shuvah* 7:5). When we get our act together, when we return to HaShem, and keep His Torah, the Messianic Age begins. The only question is what will be the impetus to bring about this *t'shuvah*. Will it be a human-being, a “king of flesh and blood” who will inspire us to do *t'shuvah*, or will HaShem have to force us to do *t'shuvah* by putting us through the “*Birth pangs of the Mashiach*”? It is our *chiddush* that R' Hillel was more than likely correct when he held the position he did vis-à-vis the *Mashiach*. It is not that we will be lacking a king of flesh and blood to sit on the throne of David, as this prophecy is assured to us throughout *Tanakh*. It is just that it will not be the glorious coming, but rather the humble coming. It is the end of Rabbi Hillel's “controversial” statement that is the key to understand his view. During the days of *Chizkiyahu*, the *Yidden* were as *frum* as they have ever been. Our Sages tell us that even the children were knowledgeable in the intricate Laws of Purity and Impurity – one of the most difficult subjects in the Torah. Yet despite all of this, *Yemos HaMashiach* did not commence. What Rabbi Hillel taught us was that we have already had our chance to get it together – in the days of *Chizkiyahu HaMelech*. What we are destined for – unfortunately – will be the kind of birth pangs that will force us to give up all hope in any earthly intercessor, and to put all of our hopes on HaShem.

Was R' Yosef suggesting that R' Hillel was unaware of the *passuk* in Zechariah when he made his controversial statement? Or is R' Yosef chastising R' Hillel for speaking *lashon hara* about the Jewish people? [“May G-d forgive him (for saying so)”] The *passuk* that R' Yosef quotes is – in this author's eyes – the key to this Gemara, and R' Yosef did so (perhaps unknowingly?) through *Ruach HaKodesh*. Why didn't R' Yosef quote the *passuk* from Daniel about the “glorious coming of the *Mashiach*” as reproof to R' Hillel? Was it – perhaps – because R' Yosef somehow had conceded that the Jewish people would never do *t'shuvah* on their own, thus bringing about fulfillment of the prophecy of *Mashiach* as depicted in Daniel? Was it – perhaps – that R' Yosef was chastising Rabbi Hillel for speaking *lashon hara* about *Klal Yisroel* and the negligible likelihood that we can do *t'shuvah* on our own, inspired by a human leader?

This is akin to the *lashon hara* spoken by Moshe to HaShem at the burning bush: “*They will not believe me*” (*Shemos* 4:1; **Rashi, Shemos 4:2, 3**). Even if the odds are against *Klal Yisroel* ever getting her act together on her own, it is still denigrating to say so aloud. This is the *lashon hara* spoken by Rabbi Hillel, and chastised by R' Yosef. It takes a great nation to produce a great leader, and even the greatest leader of any generation is but a mirror of the generation in which he lives (*Noach, righteous in his generation, for example*). Thus what R' Yosef was really chastising Rabbi Hillel about was for even suggesting that *Klal Yisroel* would fail to produce a generation capable of producing a leader who could inspire us to do *t'shuvah* (the way that *Chizkiyahu HaMelech* did in his generation) and thus avoid the “*Birth pangs of the Mashiach*” which *Chazal* dreaded.

Yes, HaShem will still work though His *Mashiach*. We will still have our king of flesh and blood, but no matter how righteous he will be, even he will need HaShem as his Redeemer. We are not suggesting that there is not longer a possibility that *Klal Yisroel* will get her act together, and bring about a glorious advent of HaShem's *Mashiach*, it is only that the odds are against us. Rabbi Hillel sensed that this was the case, and thus his statement.

Again, there is still the possibility that a leader will arise who will inspire us to do *t'shuvah* without the “birth pangs,” it's just not a probability. This was the understanding of Rabbi Hillel, and it was only that this position was tantamount to *lashon hara* that Rabbi Yosef objected to. After all, the entire 12th Principle of the Rambam is to provide hope to *Klal Yisroel* that there is “light at the end of the tunnel,” that the *Mashiach* could arrive any day. But if, as our *chiddush* poses, we have already had our best chance to bring the *Ge'ulah* early, and we are destined to wait until the latter date on HaShem's calendar (the humble *Ge'ulah* as depicted in Zechariah 9), then the hope has been diminished, and our destiny is in HaShem's Hands, rather than in our own.

**Klal Yisroel has to Merit the Mashiach
BEFORE HaShem will send Eliyahu HaNavi
To reveal the identity of His End of Day's Messenger, Part IV**

Zechariah 12:10 & Mashiach Ben Yosef

The *passuk*, in context, reads (Zechariah 12:9-11) “And it shall come to pass on that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look towards Me, [because of] (regarding) [he who] (those whom) the nations have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only son, and shall be in bitterness over him, as one who is in bitterness for his firstborn.* On that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadad-Rimmon in the valley of Megiddo.”

Rashi understands the above *passukim* as follows: “(12:9) **I will seek to destroy** I will seek their destruction, and I will be exact in judging their iniquity. And our Sages (*Avodah Zarah* 4a) explained this verse as concerning merit. I will search in the books of their deeds; if they have merit, I will spare them; otherwise, I will destroy them. (12:10) **a spirit of grace and supplications** That it should come into their mind to supplicate Me, and they will be in My good graces. **a spirit** a desire. **they shall look to Me because of those who have been thrust through** Jonathan renders: *And they shall supplicate Me because of their wanderings. And they shall look to Me to complain about those of them whom the nations thrust through and slew during their exile. and they shall mourn over it* Over that slaughter. **as one mourns over an only son** As a man mourns over his only son. And our Sages expounded this in tractate Sukkah (52a) as referring to the Messiah, son of Joseph, who was slain. (11) like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the Valley of Megiddon Hadadrimmon has no connection to the Valley of Megiddon. These are, rather, two cases of mourning. [The first is] like the mourning of Ahab the son of Omri, who was slain by Hadadrimmon the son of Tabrimmon in Ramoth Gilead, as it is stated (I Kings 22:36): “A cry passed through the camp.” That is the mourning [of Ahab. The second case is] like the mourning of Josiah the son of Amon, who was slain by Pharaoh the lame in the Valley of Megiddon, as it is stated (II Chron. 35:25): ‘*And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and all the singing men and singing women spoke in their laments, etc.*’”

Succah 52a, regarding *Mashiach Ben Yosef*, reads – *And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart.* [Zechariah 12:12] Is it not, they said, an a fortiori argument? If in the future [*The time alluded to in the text cited.*] when they will be engaged in mourning and the Evil Inclination will have no power over them, [*So that levity is least to be expected.*] the Torah [*Sc. Scripture, in the statement ‘and their wives apart’.*] nevertheless says, men separately and women separately, how much more so now [*At the festivities of the Water-Drawing.*] when they are engaged in rejoicing and the Evil Inclination has sway over them. [*And undue levity is most likely.*]

What is the cause of the mourning [mentioned in the last cited verse]? [Zechariah 12:12] — R. Dosa and the Rabbis differ on the point. One explained, The cause is **the slaying of Messiah the son of Joseph**, [*The precursor of the Messiah ben David, the herald of the true Messianic age.*] and the other explained, The cause is **the slaying of the Evil Inclination**.

It is well according to him who explains that 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 mourns for his only son; [Zechariah 12:10] but according to him who explains the cause to be the slaying of the Evil Inclination, is this [it may be objected] an occasion for mourning? Is it not rather an occasion for rejoicing? Why then should they weep? — [The explanation is] as **R. Judah expounded:** In the time to come [*The Messianic age.*] **the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring the Evil Inclination and slay it in the presence of the righteous and**

the wicked. To the righteous it will have the appearance of a towering hill, and to the wicked it will have the appearance of a hair thread. Both the former and the latter will weep; the righteous will weep saying, ‘How were we able to overcome such a towering hill!’ The wicked also will weep saying, ‘How is it that we were unable to conquer this hair thread!’ And the Holy One, blessed be He, will also marvel together with them, as it is said, *Thus says the Lord of Hosts, If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, it shall also be marvelous in My eyes.* [Zechariah 8:6]

Judaica Books of the Prophets Commentary: “(Zechariah 12:10) **And I will pour out** – I will lavish upon the house of David, etc., the will to bring grace upon themselves and the will to offer supplication before Me (*Mezudas David*).

“**a spirit of grace and supplications** – That it should come into their mind to supplicate Me, and they will be in My good graces (Rashi).

“**a spirit** – a desire (Rashi). They will have a desire to pray to G-d.

“*Redak* explains: They will find favor in My eyes, and I will save them from the nations that come upon them.

“*Rabbi Joseph Kimchi* explains that they will find favor in the eyes of all men, and their supplications will be acceptable before Me (*Redak*).

“**as one mourns over an only son** – *As a man mourns over his only son. And our Sages expounded this in tractate Sukkah (52a) as referring to the Messiah, son of Joseph, who will be slain (Rashi).* The origin of the messiah son of Joseph is related in the *Zohar Hadash, Balak* (Israeli ed. 69a, earlier ed. 56a), where it is stated: On that day, when Abijah the son of Jeroboam died, a son was born to Abijah. That son was taken from the tribe of Jeroboam to the desert; and there they took one hundred and seventy men, all righteous, from the tribe of Ephraim, who were not guilty of the sin of Jeroboam. That messiah is descended from the son of Abijah. Concerning [that messiah] it is written (*Melachim Alef* 14:13): ‘And all of Israel shall eulogize him and bury him.’ **The meaning of this prophecy is concealed**, in that it applies to its own time as well as the future. ‘For he alone of Jeroboam shall come to a grave, for there is found in that messiah a good thing toward the Lord, the G-d of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.’ This is that messiah, for he is a good thing toward the Lord.”

Judaica Books of the Prophets Commentary (continued): “In *Elijah Rabbah* (ch. 18), we read that the child whom Elijah revived was the messiah son of Joseph. Elijah requests that the widow make a small cake for him first, and then make a cake for her son. This is to show that in the ultimate redemption, he, Elijah, will come first, to gather the exiles, and the messiah will follow him.

“The account of the death of the messiah son of Joseph is found in various versions in *Ma’aseh Daniel* (*Ozar Midrashim*, p. 102), *Sefer Zerubbabel* (*Ozar Midrashim*, pp. 159-160), and *Midrash Psalms 60:3*. In this last Midrash, we are told that G-d will redeem Israel through the messiah son of Joseph, and the messiah son of David. As in the previous *midrashim*, the former is known as Nehemiah the son of Hushiel. In the war of Constantinople, he will be found dead outside Jerusalem; thereupon Israel will cry: ‘**Give us aid from an adversary, and the salvation of man is vanity. Through G-d we will gather strength, and He will trample our enemies.**”¹⁰

This author would suggest a combination of the two understandings found in the Gemara. Yes, the *passuk* refers to the death of Mashiach Ben Yosef, and yes, the *passuk* also refers to the death of the *yetzer hara*, but more specifically, then *yetzer hara* for *shittuf* – making partners with HaShem.

¹⁰ In this author’s opinion the Death of Mashiach Ben Yosef is not necessary for the Redemption to begin. Just as Moshe was prevented from entering the Land because he had failed to sanctify HaShem, Mashiach Ben Yosef will have to die so that we will quit our fixation on the messenger rather than the Sender. And just as we have suggested that Moshe could have entered the Land (if his students had learned the message he tried and tried to teach them), so, too, Mashiach Ben Yosef will not have to die, if we learn the lesson of three thousand years and recognize haShem Alone as our King, Redeemer and Savior.

We would propose the following possibility:

There will come on the scene a Torah leader second only to Moshe Rabbeinu. He will begin the process of *t'shuvah* (that will culminate in *t'shuvah shalaymah*), and he will motivate all Jews to immerse themselves in HaShem's Torah. But there will be a problem. When a leader, a teacher of his caliber arrives on the scene, and Jews are still associating the Redemption with the Mashiach, those very Jews will focus on him (much as our forefathers did with Moshe), rather than on their only King, Redeemer and Savior, HaShem. And because of this fixation on flesh and blood, HaShem will be forced to take him from us, so that we will come to the conclusion that has been in front of us the entire time, "*the salvation of man is vanity*".

Each day in our davening we read:

Birchas HaShachar, "**What are we? ... What is our salvation?** [‘What is our input in the Salvation that is in Your hands?'] **What is our strength? What is our might? ... [A]re not all the heroes like nothing before You ... ?**"

Tehillim 146, "**Do not rely on ... a human being for he holds no salvation.**"

Zohar, *Vayakhel* 369a (when taking out the *Sefer Torah*), "... [M]ay you display the salvation of **Your Right hand to Your people ... Not in any man do I put trust, nor on any angel do I rely – only in the G-d of heaven Who is the G-d of truth ...**"

And once we reach the conclusion that HaShem is our only King, Redeemer and Savior, once we cease to associate the Redemption with flesh and blood, then we will have learned *through* the death of Mashiach Ben Yosef, and *through* Mashiach Ben David (who will then be revealed in his true role as *navi*, *meturgemen* and teacher), to focus on HaShem, and then the True, Complete Redemption will occur.

This conclusion is not a *chiddush*, but rather has been prophesied in *Tanakh*. The Navi (*Michah* 5:6) reads, "**And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people like dew from the Lord, like the showers upon the grass, that hopes not for a man, and anticipates not the soul of a man.**"