

TUMMS.org
Yonason Noah ben Avraham
Cellular: 612-812-6946

QUESTION: Who wrote the following:

“Never forget that salvation is in the Almighty’s hands. When you go someplace and are in need of assistance, seek out the help of only two people, and do not exert more effort than this. As the Chovos HaLevavos writes (*Sha’ar HaBitachon* 3:3), ‘If a person trust both HaShem and in another, then his faith is not complete.’ And it says, ‘Commit your way to HaShem, and rely on Him (exclusively on Him, and nothing else), and He (and He alone) will act’ (*Tehillim* 37:5). Also it is written, ‘There is no other god besides Me; there is no righteous god besides Me and no savior other than Me’ (*Yishayahu* 45:21).” [Underlining added.]

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

___ Yonason Noach ben Avraham

___ Rav Yosef Zundel of Salant, *zt”l*, Rebbe of Rav Yisroel Salanter, found in the Twenty-fourth Letter of *Ohr Yisroel*, page 269, translated and annotated by Rabbi Zvi Miller, published by Targum/Feldheim, 2004.

___ Rav Yosef Zundel of Salant, *zt”l*, Rebbe of Rav Yisroel Salanter, found in the Twenty-fourth Letter of *Ohr Yisroel*, page 269, translated and annotated by Rabbi Zvi Miller, published by Targum/Feldheim, 2004 – **with the caveat that the only reason that this quote has found its way into this e-mail is because it fits into the “agenda” of Yonason Noach ben Avraham.**

CHALLENGE:

We expect responses from those receiving this, after they have read it in its entirety. We understand that the following bundle of texts will take time to digest, so please take your time, and PLEASE give constructive criticism.

Be well, and good week.

Yonason Noach ben Avraham

Ben Avraham – See the following page of Torah quotes, as well as a question posed regarding HaShem’s “End Times” messenger.

Passukim that teach it is ONLY in HaShem we should hope and trust

Yishayahu 45:21 וְהַגִּידוּ וְהַגִּישוּ אֵף יַעֲצוּ יַחְדָּן מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם
זֹאת מִקְדָּם מֵאֵז הַגִּידָה הַלּוֹא אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאִין־עוֹד אֱלֹהִים
מִבְּלַעֲדֵי אֵל־צַדִּיק וּמוֹשִׁיעַ אֲנִי זֹלָתִי: 22 פְּנוּ־אֵלַי וְהוֹשְׁעוּ
כָּל־אֶפְסֵי־אָרֶץ כִּי אֲנִי־אֵל וְאִין עוֹד:

Yishayahu 45:21. Declare, and bring them near; yes, let them take counsel toget her; Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Did not I the Lord? And there is no other God beside Me; a just God and a savior; there is none beside Me.¹
22. Look to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no one else.

Tehillim 146:3 אֲל־תִּבְטְחוּ בְּנָדִיבִים בְּבֶן־אָדָם | שְׂאִין לוֹ תְּשׁוּעָה:
5 אֲשֶׁר־י שָׂאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ שִׁבְרוּ עַל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיו:

Tehillim 146:3, 5: “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no salvation... Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.”²

Tehillim 27:14 קוּה אֲל־יְהוָה תִּזְק וַיִּאֲמֵן לִבִּי וְקוּה אֲל־יְהוָה:

Tehillim 27:14. Wait on the Lord (Hope to HaShem); be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; and wait on the Lord (hope to HaShem).³

Who is our true King, Savior and Redeemer?



Birchas Kriyas Shema: “Other than You, we have no king, no redeemer, no savior.”

Ben Avraham – Yet many Observant Jews express the sentiment: “I can hardly wait for *Melech HaMashiach* to come and redeem and save us.” How is this sentiment to be understood considering the teachings of Rav Yosef Zundel of Salant, ז”ל, Rebbe of Rav Yisroel Salanter:

“Never forget that salvation is in the Almighty’s hands. When you go someplace and are in need of assistance, seek out the help of only two people, and do not exert more effort than this. As the Chovos HaLevavos writes (*Sha’ar HaBitachon* 3:3), ‘If a person trust both HaShem and in another, then his faith is not complete.’ And it says, ‘Commit your way to HaShem, and rely on Him (exclusively on Him, and nothing else), and He (and He alone) will act’ (*Tehillim* 37:5). Also it is written, ‘There is no other god besides Me; there is no righteous god besides Me and no savior other than Me’ (*Yishayahu* 45:21).”

¹ Quoted in Letter Twenty-Five of *Ohr Yisroel*, titled “The Blessing of Affliction”
² Quoted in Letter Twenty-Four of *Ohr Yisroel*, titled “Immutable Faith”
³ Quoted in Letter Twenty-Four of *Ohr Yisroel*, titled “Immutable Faith”

Respondent “A” (first response):

The word *Moshiach* means nothing more than “anointed” – it does not mean Messiah, Savior, or any other *na’arishkeit* – it is referring to the King of Israel, who was anointed, The Kohen Gadol was also anointed and he is also referred to as *Mashiach* in the Torah. The King served as a leader to the Jewish people. Requesting leadership is perfectly legitimate, and does not compromise the concepts below. Particularly, when the request is for leadership in an international world movement toward world unity and perfection. Why are you making such a big deal of *Mashiach* – You’re coming across as a closet *Meshiachist* ☺

Again, there is nothing wrong with davening for leadership. Were not davening to the leader – we are davening to HaShem to send us a leader who can help us return to Him.

Ben Avraham Retort:

Actually, the word “Messiah” is the Anglicization of the Hebrew word “*Mashiach*,” and Observant Jews MUST understand that when we express enthusiasm for the coming of the *Mashiach* (and make a “king of flesh and blood” into a larger than life figure) that Christians have no problem with those expressed hopes (as they have already blown the concept of the *Mashiach* out of proportion), they just believe we have missed the boat on who the Messiah is.

Also, this writer knows exactly what the word *Mashiach* means and how it is used in *Tanakh*. *Tanakh* gives very little space (as measured in number of *passukim*) to the person who will be the *Mashiach*. *Tanakh* does not call the End Times *Yemos HaMashiach*, but rather *Katz* or *Katz HaYamim* [and does not labeling these auspicious times after a human king rather than the King of Kings automatically suggest that a king of flesh and blood is indeed larger than life?]. The emphasis on the *Mashiach* that this writer senses was not fomented by the *Navi'im* included in *Tanakh*, but rather is a post-Biblical in origin.

As far as praying for leadership is concerned, let’s take a look at exactly how the *b’rachah* in the *Shemoneh Esrei* reads, but more importantly, Who is the Source of what we are praying for (ArtScroll translation):

“The offspring of Your servant David may You speedily cause to flourish, and enhance his pride through Your salvation, for we hope for Your salvation all day long. Blessed a You, HaShem, Who causes the pride of salvation to flourish.”

Note that all of this is dependent upon HaShem, and, just as Moshe was nothing more than HaShem’s messenger, so too will the person who will be the *Mashiach* be nothing more than His messenger.

As far as praying to HaShem to *send us a leader who will help us return to Him*, we have several comments:

1) According to the Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim* 4:10), “...In all matters, his (a Jewish king’s) deeds shall be for the sake of Heaven. His purpose and his intent shall be to elevate the true faith....” Thus we agree that any Jewish king (David, Solomon, Hezekiah, the *Mashiach*, *et al*) is tasked with directing us toward a proper *hashkafah* and *avodah* vis-à-vis HaShem.

2) HOWEVER, to say that we are powerless to do all that we can to return on our own, and that we need a “king of flesh and blood” BEFORE we can return is, unfortunately, more Christian and Jewish. We will explain:

According to HaShem’s Torah, when we are in *Gallus*, we do have the ability to seek out and find HaShem (*Devarim* 4:29-30): **“But if from there [the *Gallus*] you shall seek the Lord your God, you shall find him, if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.** When you

are in distress, and all these things have come upon you, in **the latter days**, if **you** turn to the Lord your God, and shall be obedient to his voice.” **WE** have the ability to seek out and find Him. **WE** might be able to use the guidance of a teacher to augment our *t’shuvah shalaymah*, **but** the presence of the End Time’s teacher (the *Mashiach*) is **NOT** a prerequisite to seeking and finding HaShem.

How can we know the above is the correct understanding of the current pre-End Times state of events? Because we say so every single day when davening *Uvah L’Tzion (Yishayahu 59:20)*: “And a redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord.” Thus we must do *t’shuvah* BEFORE HaShem sends His anointed, not as a result of Him sending him.

And as for the claim that the current *Yiddisha Hashkafa* (the above response in NOT – unfortunately – the first time we have heard this stated) that we cannot return to HaShem without the *Mashiach*, let’s us look at how Paul, in the New Testament, mangles the intent of the *navi Yishayahu* (Romans 11:26): “And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”

The *navi* wrote: “And a redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord.”

Paul wrote: “And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”

In *Tanakh*, the onus is on us to return to HaShem, THEN He will send *Eliyahu HaNavi* to reveal who His *Mashiach* is. Christian Theology makes their Messiah the end-all-and-be-all of their version of the End Times. Should we not, as HaShem’s purveyors of His Truth, make certain that our approach cannot be confused with their approach?

Yonason Noach ben Avraham

Respondent “A” Response #2 (additional response to all of the above):

We seem to be in agreement on every point thus far so I’m confused as to why you still feel this is such a problem.

I also hope you did not understand my response to mean that I felt we could not return to HaShem without Mashiach. I don’t know how you could have hopelessly distorted my response to mean that. We ask for assistance. Stop making such a big deal. [Underlining & Color added.]

Ben Avraham Retort to Response #2:

NOTE: We stress that all human-beings, both Jews and non-Jews, are obligated to cultivate a relationship with HaShem through their respective paths in His Torah. We stress that all Torah Observant Jews should be on the same page when it comes to our approach to HaShem and His Torah. And we stress that we are not seeking trouble, but rather clarity on these matters. But we also know that of the elements that make up the End Times:

- a) **The final wars will be fought and won**
- b) **There will be universal peace on earth**
- c) **All of mankind will have a *hashkafah emes* regarding HaShem; universal knowledge of G-d**
- d) **All Jews will keep the 613; all non-Jews will keep the Seven Laws of Noah**
- e) **All *Yidden* will be ingathered into Eretz Yisroel**
- f) **The Third Temple will be in place**

- g) **The Kohanim (and firstborn?) will once again be doing the Avodah**
- h) **Eventually, there will be the Resurrection of the Dead**
- i) **And, there will be a “king of flesh and blood” sitting upon the earthly throne of Israel**

If any Observant Jew, who would try to place the above elements into an hierarchy of most important to least important, and who would place having a “king of flesh and blood” before any of the other elements, we would have to question whether or not they have a *hashkafah emes* regarding the End Times. And IF any Jew would claim that without the *Mashiach*, we will not have any of the other things, we would respond that just because it is HaShem’s Will that in conjunction with His Mission, He chooses to communicate to all of mankind through a prophet, does not equate with HaShem (*chas v’shalom*) NEEDING the *Mashiach* in order to accomplish His Goals.

Just as He spoke through Moshe to Pharaoh, in order to preserve Pharaoh’s free-will, He will work in conjunction with the *Mashiach* in order to preserve the free-will of the world, until it is time to make His Presence palpable.

We are all on the same team, and none of this is meant to foment friction, but this Jew has yet to witness a serious debate on these issues, and he truly desire one.

If I have misunderstood the term “help” as found in the original response, then I apologize. But it must be understood that the word “help” can be ambiguous. “Help” can mean assistance when someone is already involved with a task; but “help” can also suggest aiding someone who cannot accomplish the task on his own. An example would be (*Devarim 22:4*): “You shall not watch your brother’s ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him to lift them up again.” In this situation, the fallen ass, or ox, (or brother,) needs assistance just to get back onto its feet. This is the kind of help that is given when the object of the help is helpless.

Let’s go on....

Respectfully, I do not know how you, solitary respondent, could ever think that I advocate “making a big deal about the *Mashiach*!” How you could ever have “hopelessly distorted” my words and actions so as to think that I advocate any upbraiding of the exalted position that the *Mashiach* currently holds in the Jewish world today. As virtually everyone who was sent my original E-mail knows, I – as a convert to Torah Observant Judaism – have a great concern that most Jews do not understand, and thus, are the ones who make too much of our future “king of flesh and blood” (may HaShem send *Eliyahu HaNavi* to reveal his identity in our days!). I am the one who references the *Navi Yishayahu* (40:22): “**It is He [HaShem] Who sits upon the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are as grasshoppers;** who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in,” and asks the question: “Who is one of those ‘grasshoppers’? Isn’t the *Mashiach* one of those ‘grasshoppers’?”

I am the one who suggested to the Rav of the *shul* I attend that the *drasha-ending* phrase, “...Until that greatest *simchah*, with the coming of the *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*, Amein,” is vague, and possibly misleading, to any Jew who does not understand that the *Mashiach* will be merely HaShem’s spokesman during the End Times, when He will ingather us, when He will lead us to victory in the End Times’ Wars, when He will circumcise our hearts so that we might keep His Torah naturally, *et al.* I am aware that the Rav of the *shul* I attend has ceased to use this phrase in my presence; but I am also aware that he continues to utilize the phrase in question when I am not in attendance at *shul*. So who is fighting to place a proper perspective on our future “king of flesh and blood,” and who is continuing to be a potential stumbling-block for all Jews who hear his words and who do not have a *hashkafah emes* regarding *Mashiach*?

That phrase, “...Until that greatest *simchah*, with the coming of the *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*, Amein,” has the potential to place the Mashiach on a level that he does not deserve, and where he does not belong. According to **Avos 2:5** [as well as **Avos 1:11**], a teacher should not saying something vague and assume that the student/listener will come to the correct/intended understanding. Is the coming of our “king of flesh and blood” really the greatest *simchah*? Rather don’t we really want an end to all wars, universal knowledge of HaShem, the ingathering of all Jews into the Land of Israel, the Third Temple, and – eventually – the Resurrection of the dead? Don’t we really want HaShem to be our King⁴, rather than having a “king of flesh and blood” to reign over us? “Oh, but that’s what the Rav means when he says what he says,” I’ve heard more than once. But I cannot read the Rav’s mind, and neither can the newly observant Jew who drinks in every word that comes out of the Rav’s mouth as if they were *mun* from heaven. Again I reference Avos 2:5 and ask if the phrase, “...Until that greatest *simchah*, with the coming of the *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*, Amein,” is clear to the point that it cannot be misunderstood, and if we are not making assumptions that could be detrimental to those who are not well versed in the Rambam’s 12th Principle, and the details contained therein.

Please consider the following as we believe that this example of unclear speech, coupled with reasonable misunderstandings of the assembled listeners, is the thrust of our argument:

Imagine the Rav of a Shul is speaking in front of four individuals: a *Shomer Shabbos Yid*, a “Believing” Lubavitcher, a Reformed Jew, and a Jew for Jesus. And upon concluding his talk, this Rav closes with the phrase: “...Until that greatest *simchah*, with the coming of the *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*, Amein.” What will be the reactions of the four listeners?

The Shomer Shabbos Yid will (hopefully) think: “Amein, because I know that the *Mashiach* is not the end-all-and-be-all of existence, and that he is merely HaShem’s spokesman during the time that HaShem will fulfill His promises to His Chosen People, as well as the entire world.”

The “Believing” Lubavitcher will think: “AMEIN, as the return of the Rebbe will most certainly be a day of great joy for all of his faithful followers!”

The Reformed Jew will (unfortunately) think: “Messiah? What Messiah?”

And the Jew for Jesus will think: “AMEIN, as the Second Coming of Jesus will certainly be a glorious day for the entire body of believers!”

Now we are certain that the latter three reactions were NOT what this well-meaning Rav intended, but now that these three “reasonable” reactions have been pointed out to this Rav, is it incumbent upon him to end his *drashas* with a phrase that cannot be so misunderstood?

And what about the sect of *Chassidim* whose mantra is, “We want *Moshiach* now”? Haven’t they made more out of the *Mashiach* that the *Mashiach* deserves? And when they hear the Rav say, “...Until that greatest *simchah*, with the coming of the *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*, Amein,” you can bet that they are thinking and saying “Amein” louder than anyone else in the congregation. As you are aware, one of the members of this branch of *Chassidism* that *davens* at out *shul* has a picture of his dead rebbe on his *shtender* while he *davens*. And, as you are aware, I was one of the only members of our shul to protest against this photograph’s presence. Yet I’m

⁴ **Zechariah 14:9**. And **the Lord shall be King over all the earth**; on that day the Lord shall be one, and His name one.

the one who is making too much of *Mashiach*? *Hilchos Lifnei Eiver* prohibits us from doing or saying anything that might either lead someone to an *hashkafah sheker*, or strengthen an *hashkafah sheker* that one might already have. Thus to even mention the *Mashiach* in the phrase, “...Until that greatest *simchah*, with the coming of the *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*, Amein,” could be problematic according to a strict application of the laws against placing a stumbling-block before a “blind” person. And what about the succor that this sect has given to Christians who have been awaiting the return of their “dead rebbe” for 2000 years? “Oh, I’m sorry, Christian Missionary, but Judaism doesn’t allow for a dying and resurrecting Messiah.” Unfortunately, because of this sect, seemingly, we do have room for such *na’arishkeit*. ...

No Jew would ever give credit for the creation of the heavens and the earth to any being besides HaShem. Yet when it comes to overt public miracles, most Jews see no problem with crediting HaShem’s “messengers.”

This writer believes that the over-emphasis of Moshe during the Exodus from Egypt resulted in the Incident of the Golden Calf. This writer also sees evidence of the same kind of over-emphasis of the *Mashiach*. Is the *Gallus* being prolonged by HaShem because we are waiting for a “messenger” to do the things that *Tanakh* attributes to HaShem? Are we placing our hopes on a man, who himself will need to be redeemed?

In *Parashas Shoftim* we find the *passukim* (*Devarim* 20:1, 4): “When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses, and chariots, and a people more numerous than you, be not afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt... 4. For the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.” The Rashi to *Devarim* 20:4 reads: “**For the Lord, your God...** They [the nations] are coming with the victory of flesh and blood, whereas you approach with the victory of the Omnipresent. The Philistines came with the victory of Goliath—What was his end? He fell, and they fell with him.”

That week, after davening Shabbos morning, this author asked a congregation member the following question, “Who will lead us to victory in the End Time’s Wars?” The answer I received was, “*Mashiach*.” I informed the responder (politely), “According to this week’s Parasha, you think more like a *goy* and a *Yid*.”

This writer once took an unscientific poll of ten *frum Yidden* some two years ago. The question I asked them was, “If the subject of the *Geulah* comes up at the Shabbos table, who is the subject of conversation, HaShem or the *Mashiach*?” Nine of them begrudgingly answered “the *Mashiach*,” and the tenth – who knew of my concerns – refused to answer because he was going to answer “the *Mashiach*.” [I could see it in his eyes!]

The results of this unscientific poll has to be considered in light of the text of the *Pesach Hagaddah*. The role played by Moshe was purposely, systematically diminished so that all of the credit for all of the miraculous occurrences goes to HaShem. Yet when it comes to our impending Redemption, and the role that will be played by the *Mashiach*, very few (if any) Jews are concerned with potential confusion over Who or who deserves the credit for the upcoming miraculous events that will make those that happened around the Exodus from Egypt pale in comparison.

Finally, Jews MUST understand that Christianity makes no distinction between “G-d” and their *Mashiach*. It would seem, from a Torah True point of view, that there can be no comparison between our Creator and one of His creations. It would seem, from a Torah True point of view, that any single *passuk* is either referring to HaShem, or it is not referring to HaShem. In this Jews eyes, to say that a *passuk* can be referring to both HaShem and one of His messengers – that the two are somehow interchangeable – is anathema to the *Emes* of HaShem’s

Torah. However, there are *passukim* whose meaning seems to be interchangeable, referring to either HaShem or His Mashiach, and this “fact” is more than troubling to this Jew – especially when Christians are well aware of our Sages’ views and writings, and they can and will use our “ambiguities” against us and against our brethren who have very little connection to HaShem and His Torah in order to lure them into accepting Jesus of Nazareth as the “Lord and Savior”. These “interchangeable” *passukim* include:

a) **Chavakkuk 2:3**. For the vision is still for an appointed time, and it speaks concerning the end, and does not lie; **though it seems slow, wait for it**; because it will surely come, it will not come late.

b) **Yishayahu 30:18**⁵. And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious to you, and **therefore will He be exalted**, that He may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; **happy are all those who wait for Him**.

Both of the above *passukim* are used to show that we are to actively await the coming of the *Mashiach*. While we have no doubt that HaShem will Redeem us, and that in the course of His Redemption He will communicate to us through a prophet/king, His “anointed one,” we question utilizing secondary meanings to *passukim* to prove this point. The *passuk* from *Chavakkuk* has a *p’shat* regarding a “vision” about an “appointed time,” and if that “appointed time seems slow [in coming], wait for the appointed time” because the appointed time will surely come, the appointed time will not come late. The *passuk* from *Yishayahu* has a *p’shat* regarding the joy of all who await HaShem. But both of these *passukim* have been utilized to justify awaiting the *Mashiach*. The Navi *Chavakkuk*’s prophecy is tweaked to read, “**If he (*Mashiach*) tarries, wait for him,**” and the Navi *Yishayahu*’s prophecy is interpreted to read, “**Happy are all those who wait for him (*Mashiach*).**”

Yes, we agree that there are seventy interpretations to the *passukim* of the Torah, and we agree that there are authentic lessons to be learned from midrashic understandings of *passukim*, but – according to Rashi, as he states several times in his commentary on *Chumash* – we also know that a *passuk* can never leave its plain meaning. In the commentaries we have seen that read *Mashiach* into these *passukim*, there does not seem to be any indication that the commentators are stating a secondary interpretation; rather these sources write as if the *Mashiach* is the *p’shat* of these *passukim*. Again, it is our strong position that HaShem and *Mashiach* are NOT interchangeable, and when we seemingly make them interchangeable, we are playing right into the misinterpretations of Christian theologians.

The last *passuk* that we will examine here once again seems to imply that a *passuk* can have an interchangeable *p’shat*: either HaShem or *Mashiach* can fit into the plain meaning of the text:

c) **Malachi 3:1**⁶. Behold, I send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me; and **the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple**, and the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in, behold, he shall come, says the Lord of hosts.

⁵ **Rashi, Yishayahu 30:18 – Therefore** Because you would not obey. **the Lord shall wait to be gracious to you** He (acc. to *Parshandatha*) does not skip for you over the evil decree, which was decreed upon you, in order to hasten and to bring the good, but He will wait until its end comes. **and therefore, He shall withdraw to have mercy upon you** (ירום) He shall draw Himself far away to have mercy upon you. **for the Lord is a God of justice** and He first metes out justice upon those who rebel against Him. **fortunate are all who wait for Him** for the consolations that **He** promised, for nothing shall fail.

⁶ **Rashi, Malachi 3:1. Behold I send My angel** to put the wicked away. **and he will clear a way** of the wicked. **the Lord Whom you seek** *The God of justice*. **and the angel of the covenant** who avenges the revenge of the covenant.

Rashi (see the footnote) understands the above *passuk* to refer to *HaShem, Whom we seek, returning to His Temple*. However, there are notable sages who read the *passuk* as referring to the *Mashiach, whom we seek, will come suddenly to his palace*. This is disturbing to us as we have looked at every single place where the word *hachal* (sanctuary/temple) is found in *Tanakh*, and every time (when the word is in conjunction with HaShem or *Klal Yisroel*) the word is referring to the *Bais HaMikdash*. In our *passuk* the word is *hachalo*, His Temple. The *Mashiach* does not live, or even reign, in the Temple. Also, when one studies the word “*seek*,” one will find that the word is always used to be referring to us seeking HaShem.

Again, HaShem cannot and should not be interchangeable with ANY of His creations in a *passuk*, and if a distinction is not made then we are possibly guilty of allowing for the possibility of the Christian position that the *Mashiach* is (*chas v'shalom*) “G-d” in the flesh.

Be well, good Shabbos.

Yonason Noach ben Avraham

Respondent “A” Response #3 (to the above Ben Avraham Retort):

You actually have got the order wrong...according to all the sources I know of, *Mashiach* will come before the wars...the temple...universal unity...etc....sorry my friend, but you are prioritizing according to YOUR understanding of Yiddishkeit and not seeking to understand the Sages' understanding.

RE: your pre-occupation with over-revering our flesh and blood leaders...here again...you're off our sages' track...see Talmud Kiddushin 57a Rebbe Akiva ...taught "*es Hashem Elokecha Tirah*" (you shall revere HaShem your G-d)... the extra word "*es*" means to include our reverence of our *Talmidei Chachamim*... See also *Rashi Vayishlach* (33-20) quoting Talmud Megillah 18a ...*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* called Yaakov *Avinu "Eil"* (one of G-d's names...(!)) You can see that our reverence of our Torah leaders comes from our reverence of HaShem...Whose Torah they embody and espouse.

Re: Moshe splitting the sea...see above and see Midrash B'shalach (21-9) *Hakadosh B"H* said to Moshe... Cast away your staff (and stretch your HAND out over the sea) so people should not say you could not have split the sea without your staff... HaShem Himself wanted the people to acknowledge Moshe's capabilities without his staff in splitting the sea... Food for thought...

Ben Avraham Retort to Response #3 (immediately above) – In retort to the additional response we note that all of the responses challenge whether or not this author hold positions that are in accordance with those of our sages; let us see if those critiques are warranted:

a) **The response reads: You actually have got the order wrong**...according to all the sources I know of, *Mashiach* will come before the wars...the temple...universal unity...etc....sorry my friend, but you are prioritizing according to YOUR understanding of Yiddishkeit and not seeking to understand the Sages' understanding.

Ben Avraham – When this writer listed all of the elements of the End Times he was NOT listing them in the order in which they will occur – he was merely listing “*all of the elements*” and the fact that he listed our “king of flesh and blood” last was because according to his *hashkafah*, all of the other elements are of more importance. This was clear in this writer’s response, and not contradictory to the teaching of our sages. Besides, **according to the Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim*), until the End Time’s Prophecies have been fulfilled we will not know how they will be fulfilled or in which order they will be fulfilled.** Does the Rambam count as a sage?

b) **Your pre-occupation with over-revering our flesh and blood leaders...** here again...you're off our sages' track...see **Talmud Kiddushin 57a** Rebbe Akiva ...taught "*es Hashem Elokecha Tirah*" (*you shall revere HaShem your G-d*)... the extra word "es" means to include our reverence of our *Talmidei Chachamim*... See also *Rashi Vayishlach* (33-20) quoting Talmud Megillah 18a ...*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* called Yaakov Avinu "*Eil*" (one of G-d's names...(!)) You can see that our reverence of our Torah leaders comes from our reverence of HaShem...Whose Torah they embody and espouse.

Ben Avraham – Reverence for “flesh and blood” cannot and should not be confused, or even compared with, our fear/love/reverence for HaShem. Oh, yes, we are commanded to respect our sages, but even the greatest of our sages, Moshe Rabbeinu, was not perfect ... Moshe was capable of mistakes (I’m confident that you can come up with your own examples). HaShem, on the other hand, is incapable of mistakes, and to interpret the words of our sages (listed above, and *et al*) to mean that reverence for our sages is even in the same league as our reverence for HaShem simply has to be a misinterpretation. What I am against is “blind faith” in creations who can and do make contradictory statements and thus who cannot be trusted blindly. The Torah concept of *Emunas Chachamim* cannot be quoted to suggest faith in the sages that is comparable to faith in HaShem. **Makkos 10a** teaches us that our sages learned the most from their students. If their students just sat their with their heads bobbing up and down, with total, blind *Emunas Chachamim*, the students would be incapable of even asking a question. Moshe was a *navi* of the highest level (Rambam, *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*), yet he was capable of, and made, mistakes – how much more so are lesser creations capable of mistakes. And to suggest that *Emunas Chachamim* and *Emunas HaShem* CAN be compared goes against the teachings of our **navi'im**:

Yishayhu 40:18. To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare to Him?

Yishayahu 46:5. To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we may be like?

And I am also against crediting creations with miracles that are performed by HaShem, as miracles are performed only, and solely, by HaShem (*B'rachos* 50a as well as the Rabbi Kaplan source quoted above). And if the response is that HaShem “controls/does” everything ... I say that if one compares the ability to walk across the room with the parting of the sea, his *hashkafah* (as well as his sense of reality about

“freedom of choice” when it comes to *Olam HaSheker*) needs adjustment. Our navi'im also teach us about this:

Shemos 16:7. And in the morning, then you shall see **the glory of the Lord**; when He hears your murmurings against the Lord; and what are we, that you murmur against us? 8. And Moses said, This shall be, when the Lord shall give you in the evening meat to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the Lord hears your murmurings which you murmur against Him; and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord... 10. And it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, **the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.** 11. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 12. I have heard the murmurings of the people of Israel; speak to them, saying, **At evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God.**

Bamidbar 14:22. Because all those men which have seen My glory, and My miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not listened to My Voice

Yishayahu 42:8. I am the Lord; that is My Name; and My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to carved idols.

Certainly the sages' teachings should not be interpreted to be contrary to the *p'shat* of *Tanakh*, should they?

c) **Moshe splitting the sea...** see above and see *Midrash B'shalach* (21-9⁷) “*Hakadosh B"H* said to Moshe... Cast away your staff (and stretch your HAND out over the sea) so people should not say you could not have split the sea without your staff...” ***HaShem Himself wanted the people to acknowledge Moshe's capabilities without his staff in splitting the sea...***

Ben Avraham – The *p'shat* of Torah cannot be overridden by *midrashim* that often contradict themselves⁸. The lesson of the mentioned Midrash has to be considered

⁷ **Shemos Rabbah 21:9** – R. Simeon said: It is like an officer who was walking about in the street with the rod [*Lit. a 'vine shoot', i.e. a staff of vine wood carried by the Roman Centurions as the badge of their office, and as the symbol of their power to inflict punishment.*] of his office in his hand. People said: 'Were it not for the rod in his hand, he would not receive all this honor.' When the king heard this, he said, 'Put aside the rod and walk out into the street, and if anyone fails to greet thee, I will behead him.' This is also what the Egyptians said: 'Moses cannot do anything without his rod; for with it he smote the Nile and brought on us all the plagues.' When the Israelites went into the midst of the Sea, with the Egyptians standing behind them, **God said to Moses: 'Cast away thy rod, so that they do not say: "Were it not for the rod, he would not have been able to divide the sea,"'** as it says, And *cast away (harem)* [*Harem now being derived from ramah, to cast. E.V. 'lift up'.*] thy rod.

⁸ **Ben Avraham** – As per our argument, we offer a “contradicting” selection from **Avos D'Rebbe Nosson** [NOTE: it is NOT our position that one of these *midrashim* is correct, and that the other is wrong; what we are suggesting is that these “competing” *midrashim* are teachings of our sages that are meant to offer ethical insights into the story that is told in HaShem's Torah, but cannot overturn the *p'shat*] –

Chapter 33:2 “Ten Miracles at the Sea”

When our ancestors stood at the Red Sea, Moshe said to them: “March across!”

“We will not go across,” they retorted, “until tunnels appear in the sea for us [to pass through].”

in light of the plain meaning of HaShem’s Torah, and the Torah clearly states that HaShem split the sea with an east wind. The Ramban also holds that HaShem parted the sea (see his commentary in order to have the matter clarified). The Ramban mentions freedom of choice as why HaShem used an east wind to part the sea. All of the miracles associated with the Going out of Egypt were so that Klal Yisroel, Pharaoh, and all Egyptians would know that:

- a) **Moshe was HaShem’s *navi***, or:
- b) **The HaShem was the ONLY power?**

Which answer fits, and what does that answer point to regarding Who performs miracles?

We have made reasonable arguments, quoted reasonable sources, and shown that a lesson of Torah is that no one can be compared to HaShem – and any interpretations of Torah texts that condone such a comparison have to have been misquoted and/or misinterpreted.

Ben Avraham Addendum to Response #3: Moshe’s role in the Splitting of the Sea

The Respondent “A” wrote: Moshe splitting the sea...see above and see *Midrash B'shalach* (21-9) *Hakadosh B"H* said to Moshe... Cast away your staff (and stretch your HAND out over the sea) so people should not say you could not have split the sea without your staff.... HaShem Himself wanted the people to acknowledge Moshe's capabilities without his staff in splitting the sea...

Ben Avraham – So we have a Midrash that seems clear, that Moshe split the sea with just his hand (without his staff), and this was done so as to enhance Moshe in the eyes of the people. But what does the Torah have to say regarding Moshe and his staff?

Shemos 4:17. And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do signs... **20.** ... [H]e returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

Shemos 14:16. And lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and the people of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

Thus we can see that *passukim* of HaShem’s Torah CLEARLY state that Moshe was to use the rod of G-d to “do” the signs, and that the *passuk* referring to the parting of the sea

Moshe took his staff and struck the sea, and tunnels were made in the sea, as it says, *With his staff You pierced the head of his outspread troops* (*Chavakkuk* 3:14).

Said Moshe: “March across!”

“We will not go across,” they replied, “until the sea is turned into a valley.”

Moshe took his staff and struck the sea, and it became a valley, as it says, *He made the sea into a valley and brought them across* (*Tehillim* 78:13), and, *As an animal descends into a valley, so the spirit of HaShem led them* (*Yishayahu* 63:14).

Said Moshe: “March across!”

“We will not go across,” they declared, “until the sea is divided into parts.”

Moshe took his staff and struck the sea, and it was divided into parts, as it says, *To Him Who divided the Red Sea into parts* (*Tehillim* 136:13). [**Rashi, Tehillim 136:4 – To Him Who performs great wonders alone** In the beginning, no angel was created when He made the wonders... (See Rambam regarding the Parting of the Sea!)]

Said Moshe: “March across!”

“We will not go across,” they said, “until the [seabed] turns to clay [making it soft to walk on].”

Moshe took his staff and struck the sea, and it became clay, as it says,

CLEARLY has Moshe lifting up the rod (NOT tossing the rod aside). The question seems to come with the next phrase in the passuk (Shemos 14:16), which reads, “...and stretch out your hand over the sea.” This portion of the passuk does not say whether the rod was in Moshe’s hand or not. The implication suggested by the Midrash seems to be that Moshe’s hand was empty when he raised it. But let us look at a previous wonder, and how the “hand of Moshe” and the “rod of G-d” come into play.

Shemos 9:22. And the Lord said to Moses, Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. 23. And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

Did Moshe disobey HaShem? HaShem had told him to stretch out his hand (9:22), yet Moshe stretched forth his rod (9:23) [*and, by the way, Who was it that “sent the thunder and hail”? Who was it that “rained hail upon the land of Egypt”? HaShem, not Moshe!*] Did Moshe, in raising the rod, disobey HaShem, or did he understand (in accord with the lesson HaShem had taught him in Shemos 4:17) that he was to “do” the wonders with the rod of G-d in his hand?

Midrashim are – according to my understanding – ethical lessons to be derived from the Torah, but that oftentimes they cannot be taken literally. In this case, this *ger* has to go with the texts that come directly from HaShem’s Written Torah, and any Midrashic understanding has to be understood in light of the Text of His Torah.

And before the argument is that Moshe was sent to “do” the wonders with the rod, please consider the teaching of The Ramban on the least three passukim of HaShem’s Torah:

Devarim/Deuteronomy 34:10 And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face; 11 in all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land; 12 and in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel.

The Ramban, Devarim 34:11 – IN ALL THE SIGNS. This is connected with the [preceding] verse, “*And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel – in all the signs, etc.*” Or the verse may be stating that the Eternal knew Moshe face to face through the signs and wonders as they were all done with His Great Name [i.e., the Tetragrammaton], just as he said, “*...and He brought thee out with His Presence, with His great power.*”

The Ramban, Devarim 34:12 – AND IN ALL THE MIGHTY HAND. This alludes to the division of the Red Sea concerning which is said.... *N*

WHICH MOSHE ‘ASAH’ (WROUGHT) – for he prepared and displayed it in the sight of all the people. It is similar to the expressions: (Bereshis 12:5) “and the souls that they had (*asu*) gotten in Haran,” (Bereshis 18:7) “and he hurried to (*la’asoth*) prepare it,” (Devarim 5:15) “(*la’asoth*) to keep the Sabbath day.” **For Moshe did not make the mighty hand and the great terror, he merely arranged [that they be displayed by G-d], and for His sake they were wrought in the sight of all Israel.**

For lack of a better term, the rod of G-d was Moshe’s “magic wand” with which he presented the miracles wrought by HaShem. And why did HaShem use Moshe as His spokesman? So as to allow for error, so as to allow for Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and all who might

desire to, to “get it wrong” and attribute the miraculous signs and wonders associated with the Going out of Egypt to Moshe, rather than to the ONLY POWER, HaShem.

Good Shabbos,

Yonason Noach ben Avraham

Ben Avraham Addendum to the “es” referred to in Meseches Kiddushin: *(Now that we have examined this source, we find that it is evidence in support of our position, rather than is in opposition to it.* It is our understanding that Shimon [or Nechemiah] tasked himself with interpreting every “es” in the Written Torah, working on the theory that every “es” means that something should be included/added to the understanding of the passuk; but when he came to the **passuk “es HaShem Elokecha Tirah”** [“You shall revere/fear HaShem your G-d”], he stopped his project because he could not come to “including” or “adding” “something” to HaShem, as he knew that that was impossible since no entity can be compared with HaShem. If this is the case, then when Rabi Akiva “included” or “added” the Sages to HaShem, he obviously knew that they – as great as they were – could never be compared to Him, he was simply trying to find a way to *darshen* that final “es” in a way that Shimon’s project would not have to be abandoned. Thus our statement above stands, and the quoting of this Gemara “out of context” is, at least to us, problematic as it does not invalidate our position, but could be misunderstood if, again, “taken out of context.”)

Kiddushin 57a: As it was taught: Simeon the Imsonite — others state, Nehemiah the Imsonite, — interpreted every eth in the Torah, [*As an extending particle.*] but as soon as he came to, thou shalt fear [eth] the Lord thy God, [Devarim 6:13] he refrained. [Considering it impossible that this fear should be extended to another.] Said his disciples to him, ‘Master, what is to happen with all the ethin6 which you have interpreted?’ ‘Just as I received reward for interpreting [them],’ he replied: ‘so do I receive reward for retracting.’ [*Lit., ‘separating’ (myself from them). Since the eth in one verse has no particular significance, it can have none elsewhere. — It is a tribute to his character that although he must have interpreted an enormous number, he was prepared to admit his error and set them all aside.*] Subsequently [Lit., ‘until’.] R. Akiba came and taught: **Thou shalt fear [eth] the Lord thy God, that is to include scholars.** [Who are the depositaries of God’s word; hence the verse exhorts obedience to religious authority.]

Ben Avraham – “Obedience,” but not the kind or degree of *Emunas Shalaymah* or *Bitachon* that we owe to HaShem! Consider teachings from our *navi’im* before suggesting that the fear of creations can be compared to the fear of our Creator:

Yishayahu 51:12 I, I am He who comforts you! **What ails you that you fear Man who must die, Mortals who fare like grass?**

Mishlei 29:25. **The fear of man lays a trap; but whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.**

Respondent “A” (final words on the Ben Avraham retort above): **interesting that Rabbi Akiva...also a Ben Avraham according to many...doesn't seem to find Es Hashem L'rabos Talmidei Chachamim an issue....**

Ben Avraham Response – From my reading of the Gemara, the reason that Rabbi Akiva doesn’t have a problem is because he would never think of equating the fear of HaShem with fear

of the sages. YES, we need our sages, but our sages are not god-like, they are capable of mistakes and/or misinterpretations, and/or they are capable of unclear teachings. Also, I would say that the sages that Rabbi Akiva dealt with were on a different level than those that we have today.

One of the reasons that I am perceived as being the “pain in the behind” that I am is probably due to the fact that when I have asked reasonable questions, in a reasonable tone, in the past, I have often been treated as if I am not worthy of asking such questions. “Just trust in the sages,” I’ve been told. Or, “Our puny minds are incapable of grasping exactly what the sages were trying to get across on ‘that point.’” A good question deserves more than a “phoned-in” answer, and a good question deserves more than a “made-up” answer. **B’rachos 4a**, “For so a Master said: Let thy tongue acquire the habit of saying, ‘I know not’, lest thou be led to falsehoods [lying].” If someone doesn’t have an answer, don’t make a “best guess,” as we have 3300 years of Torah literature to search through to see if there has been an answer posed before.

I come from a religion that is guilty of “Messiah Craziness” to the point that their misinterpretation of the *Mashiach* makes a “king of flesh and blood” the end-all-and-be-all of their religion. There are times that I sense within Observant *Yiddishkeit* a similar kind of *Mashiach Mishugas* – at least as expressed by the written and/or spoken word. Because I cannot read another’s mind, I cannot know what he “holds” in his heart – I can only listen to what he says and how he says it. And if someone speaks about the *Mashiach*, when speaking about HaShem would be clearer and more to the point to all potential listeners, then I perceive a potential problem. [See Avos 1:11 and Avos 2:5.] Also see the final two portions of his document (*below*).

Another Response (Respondent “B”):

As usual, you make some very good points. But did you ever hear the expression, “Nobody ever died from a *kashya*”? **If you believe in Hashem and the Torah, then why must you belabor your points (valid though they may be) and make everyone around you crazy?** I gotta tell you -- I’m your friend, but I’m bored out of my skull with these endless discussions of the same few points (valid though they may be). My humble opinion, as your friend and someone who wants to see you happy, is that you need to move on with your life.

In your wildest dreams, what positive outcome would you hope to come out of these email exchanges?

Now, take a step back and try to consider what’s realistic -- Will anything (by which I mean, anything that any of your email correspondents might say to you) make you happy?

Ben Avraham – In my wildest dreams, what I hope to accomplish is to refocus the attention on, and give the credit to, He to Whom it belongs – HaShem. My “working thesis” is that the Observant Jews of the world are virtually all suffering from a case of *Mashiach Mishugas*. Some Yidden may have a more virulent case, but this Gallus amongst Christians (coupled with their over-emphasis on their “messiah”) has left us wanting and waiting for a human being to redeem us, to save us, and to be our king – when in actuality, it is HaShem Who will fulfill all of those promises, as well as fill all of those positions.

This over-emphasis on HaShem’s messengers **began with Moshe**: “...you have brought us out into the wilderness to die.” (Shemos 16:3); **was corrected by Moshe**: “And Moshe... said to all the people of Israel, At evening, then you shall know that the Lord has brought you out from the land of Egypt” (Shemos 16:5 with Rashi’s insights); **was clarified and prohibited in the first to commandments**: “I am the Lord your God, who have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Shemos 20:2-3); **was fully “realized” at the Incident of the Golden Calf**: “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, Arise, make us gods, which shall go before us; and as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what became of him” (Shemos 32:1); that the “lesson” had not been learned was **exemplified when the Well of Miriam was no longer with them**: “And there was no water for the congregation; and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people quarreled with Moses, and spoke, saying, Would God that we had died when our brothers died before the Lord! And why have you brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And why have you made us come out of Egypt, to bring us in to this evil place? This is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink” (Bamidbar 20:2-5); **and, today, is being repeated with the phrase**, “...till that greatest *simchah*, with the coming of *Mashiach tzidkeinu, Amein.*”

This *ger* believes that the average *Yid* of today is expecting a “king of flesh and blood” to rescue, save, and redeem them, when that very same “king of flesh and blood” will himself have to be rescued, saved and redeemed by HaShem. **Our evidence** (Tehillim 20:7): **“Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed**; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.” Consider this *passuk* with the commentary of the Radak: **“Now I know.”** **After** G-d grants the salvation discussed in the previous verses, **I will know that He is the Source of help and triumph.**”

The question now is, are the *Yidden* of the world going to continue to await a creation to save/redeem them (as it seems, according to the *p’shat* of Tehillim 20, is our destiny), or are they going to understand the *passuk* with the Radak and look to HaShem?⁹

Addendum, Chol HaMoed Pesach, 5767

The following Torah Thoughts are gleaned from the *sefer*, “*Festival of Freedom: Essays on Pesach and the Haggadah*,” by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. The title of the essay we will be quoting (paraphrasing and commenting upon) from is, “*Moses and the Redemption.*”

“...When G-d chose him, Moshe was very reluctant to accept the mission. He argued with the Almighty... [and] considered himself unqualified to be the leader of the people and to confront Pharaoh... ‘*Moshe said to G-d: Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should take the children of Israel out of Egypt?*’ (Shemos 3:11) – who am I, that I am worthy of being the redeemer? G-d answered him: ‘*I shall accompany you*’ (Shemos 3:12¹⁰). G-d

⁹ **Zechariah 12:10.** 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, regarding he 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.

¹⁰ **Ben Avraham** – We hesitate to interrupt the flow of Rav Soloveitchik’s argument, but we would like to include a supporting Rashi (Shemos 3:12):

And He said, “For I will be with you...” He [God] answered his former [question] first, and his latter [question] last. [Concerning] what you said, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” This [mission] is not yours but Mine, “for I will be with you.” And this vision which you have seen in the thorn bush, **is the sign for you that it was I Who sent you** And that you will succeed in My mission and that I am able

promised Moshe that He would never desert him; He would participate in the implementation of the mission, and together they would enter Pharaoh's chambers... When Moshe addresses Pharaoh, G-d will be present; when he raises the staff, G-d will be with him. In effect, G-d says, *'Bo imadi el Par'oh*, Come along with Me to Pharaoh.'

“There is a *halakhic* principle involved here. The Halachah knows of two kinds of *shelichut*, two kinds of power of attorney... One type of *shelichut* is a purely formal-judicial assignment given to a person. The other type of *shelichut* is personalistic and experiential. The former is a purely practical institution, designed simply to perform legal transactions by proxy. Quite often, one cannot attend to business personally, and therefore the Halachah provides the opportunity to act through a proxy...

“The second kind of *shelichut* is personalistic... [this] *shelichut* is a merger of identity. One acting on behalf of the other in the other's presence.

“For example, we know that when a *kohen*, a priest in the Temple, offered a sacrifice, he acted as an agent of the person who brought the sacrifice. If the *kohen* is my agent, why do I have to travel from Upper Galilee to Jerusalem in order to be present at the offering of the sacrifice? It is because this kind of *shelichut* is not merely a formal relationship between the sender and his proxy, but rather a personalistic, experiential *shelichut*... [P]ersonalistic *shelichut* is performed only when the sender is present; in his absence, there is no *shelichut*.

“Similarly... The *chazzan* is the *shli'ah*, the representative, the plenipotentiary, the agent of the people. But the congregation must be present...

“The *shelichut* entrusted to a prophet belongs to the second category of personalistic *shelichut*. Man unites with G-d, cleaves to G-d, and loves G-d with a great passion... It is the personalistic *shelichut*, where there is union between Me and you. My thoughts will become your thoughts, My speech will break through you; therefore, Moshe, you are qualified because I am qualified...

“Let us analyze further... in order to gain insight into the role the Torah has assigned to the individual leader in history. History, Judaism says, cannot move or progress without the individual. G-d waits for man if there is something to be done. He does nothing until man initiates action. G-d waits for man, for a single person, to accept responsibility and initiate the process of *ge'ulah*, or redemption. It is strange. On one hand, G-d is the *Go'el Yisroel*, our redeemer and liberator; however, G-d wills man to become His *sheli'ach* in the drama of *ge'ulah*, the personalistic *sheli'ach* with whom G-d will walk. G-d will not desert him, but G-d alone does not want to take the initiative. The Jewish people have been waiting a long time for the *Mashiach* – a human being like us who will initiate the process of *ge'ulah*¹¹.

to save you. Just as you saw the thorn bush performing My mission and not being harmed, so will you go on My mission and not be harmed.

Moshe thought he was the first kind of *sheli'ach* – one who has to rely upon his own faculties to perform the mission on which he was sent. But HaShem made it clear to Moshe that he was the second type of *sheli'ach*, and thus – since HaShem would be with him every step of the way, since the mission was HaShem's, not Moshe's – Moshe would eventually be successful. [See Rav Reuven Feinstein on *Shemos* 6:1, where Rav Feinstein offers an insight on why Moshe initially failed as HaShem's *sheli'ach*. We will be including excerpts from Rav Feinstein's understanding below.]

¹¹ **Ben Avraham** – We are acutely aware that the words of Rav Soloveitchik COULD be taken out of context in order to “prove” that we can force the *Ge'ulah*. Many (most) Lubavitchers believe that their Rebbe was/is the *Mashiach* – and they forced the issue by interpreting the Rambam so as to fit their Rebbe into the Rambam's codification of Hilchos Melachim. However, if one reads Rav Soloveitchik's words carefully, and in their entirety, he will see that G-d is not awaiting someone who has prepared himself to be the *Mashiach*. Rather, HaShem awaits *Klal Yisroel* to do *t'shuvah* (whether on their own, or because they are forced to do so because of chastisement of the nations), and then He will seek for Himself a man qualified to fill the role of the *Mashiach*. Rav Berel Wein discusses the *Lamed Vavniks*, the Thirty-six Righteous Individuals without whom the world would not exist. Rav Wein says, “If you think you're one

“The Gemara (Sanhedrin 98b) tells us that Rabbi Hillel – not Hillel the Elder – said, ‘*Ein Mashiach le-Yisroel*, Israel has no Messiah.’ Instead, G-d Himself will liberate Israel; He will not use an agent. Indeed, why should we wait for a human being to liberate the Jewish people, redeem the land, and reconstruct the Temple? Why should the fulfillment of all the glorious prophetic promises depend upon a human being, who had a father and a mother, and not upon G-d Himself? Yet the Talmud considers this statement heretical¹². ‘Rav Yosef said: May the Almighty forgive Rabbi Hillel for this.’ Rabbi Hillel did not deny the future redemption; he denied man’s role in it. According to *Chazal*, to deny the role of man in the future redemption is heresy: ‘May the Almighty forgive Rabbi Hillel.’

“G-d wants an individual great in knowledge, in morality, in prophecy, to be an participant in the drama of *ge’ulah*. G-d wills man to emerge as a great being through his acceptance of *shelichut*. Not the collective, but the individual, seizes the initiative. ‘*It came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage and their cry rose up to G-d ... and G-d saw their affliction, and G-d knew*’ (Shemos 2:23-25¹³). G-d was ready, the people were ready, the time had passed, *ge’ulah* was possible, and G-d could have taken them out in a split second. But G-d had to wait for someone. Immediately, in the next verse, Moshe is mentioned: ‘*Now Moshe kept the flock of Yisro*’ (Shemos 3:1¹⁴).

of the *Lamed Vavniks* – you’re not!” If this is true of the Thirty-six, how much more so is this true of the man whom HaShem will approach to be His *sheliach*, His *Mashiach*.

¹² Please take the time to read our *chiddush* on this piece of Gemara in the **Endnotes** at the end of this piece.

¹³ **Ben Avraham** – Please note that the Children of Israel cried out to HaShem – they did not cry out for HaShem to send them a human redeemer (*Devarim* 26:6-7): “And the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard slavery; And when we cried to the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression.” The fact that HaShem chooses to use a human *sheliach* in conjunction with His Redemption of Israel should not be the focus of our attention. Rather, we need to recognize that HaShem is our ONLY King, Redeemer, and Savior; how He orchestrates His Redemptive Mission should be of secondary importance.

¹⁴ **Shemos Rabbah 2:2** – NOW MOSES WAS KEEPING THE FLOCK... By what does He try him? By tending flocks. He tried David through sheep and found him to be a good shepherd, as it is said: *He chose David also His servant and took him from the sheepfolds* (Tehillim 77:70). Why ‘from the sheepfolds’, when the word is the same as *and the rain... was restrained?* (Bereshis 8:2). Because he used to stop the bigger sheep from going out before the smaller ones, and bring smaller ones out first, so that they should graze upon the tender grass, and afterwards he allowed the old sheep to feed from the ordinary grass, and lastly, he brought forth the young, lusty sheep to eat the tougher grass. Whereupon God said: **‘He who knows how to look after sheep, bestowing upon each the care it deserves, shall come and tend my people,’** as it says, *From following the ewes that give suck He brought him, to be shepherd over Jacob His people* (Tehillim 78:71). Also Moses was tested by God through sheep. Our Rabbis said that when Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, was tending the flock of Jethro in the wilderness, a little kid escaped from him. He ran after it until it reached a shady place. When it reached the shady place, there appeared to view a pool of water and the kid stopped to drink. When Moses approached it, he said: ‘I did not know that you ran away because of thirst; you must be weary.’ So he placed the kid on his shoulder and walked away. Thereupon God said: ‘**Because thou hast mercy in leading the flock of a mortal, thou wilt assuredly** (Lit. ‘by thy life.’) **tend my flock Israel.**’ Hence Now MOSES WAS KEEPING THE FLOCK.

Shemos Rabbah 2:6 – AND MOSES SAID: I WILL TURN ASIDE NOW, AND SEE (*Shemos* 3:3). R. Johanan said, Moses took five steps then, as it is said: ‘I will turn aside now, and see.’ R. Simeon b. Lakish said: He simply turned his face to see, as it is said: And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see. When God saw this, [That he did not actually stop his work, but merely turned aside to see.] He said: This man is worthy to tend Israel. R. Isaac said: What is the meaning of: HE TURNED A SIDE (SAR) TO SEE? God said: **This man is downcast (sar) and troubled at seeing Israel's affliction in Egypt,** [Translating: ‘and God saw that he was downcast (sar) in seeing (Israel's affliction).’] **he is, accordingly, worthy of being their shepherd.**’ Immediately, ‘God called unto him out of the midst of the bush.’

“In every generation, there is a *sheli’ach* who is qualified to become the *Ish E-lokim*, the person with whom G-d walks, who speaks on G-d’s behalf, through whom G-d speaks... Yet even though nothing happens in the absence of the *sheli’ach*, nevertheless, the *sheli’ach* is not recognized after he performs his mission.

“Let me qualify this statement. The individual deserves no praise as long his contribution consists of, or is translated into, political, economic, or military victory. However, if the share he contributes to the history of the people is of an intellectual nature, if he teaches the people and elevates them to new spiritual heights, if he is their mentor and teacher¹⁵ – then his contribution is not only recorded but is glorified...

“G-d is the warrior, man is not. ‘*G-d is a man of war*’ (Shemos 15:3)... Man cannot act as the plenipotentiary of the Almighty as far as the military, political, or economic power is concerned. *Bo el par’oh* – G-d accompanies Moshe and joins him. The warnings and stern words were announced by the Almighty; the plagues were performed by the Almighty; He did everything. G-d acted, and brought along Moshe as a companion and friend...

“Once Moshe was present, G-d did everything. The Haggadah states clearly and unequivocally that ‘The Lord brought us forth out of Egypt’ (Devarim 26:8) – not through a *malakh*, not through a *seraph*, and not through a messenger, but by the Holy One, blessed be He, alone and in His glory.’ How can the Haggadah say ‘not through a messenger’ when the Almighty Himself said to Moshe, ‘*Therefore, I shall send you to Pharaoh*’ (Shemos 3:10)? Moshe... at the end of the forty years, stated clearly that G-d ‘sent a *malakh* and brought us out of Egypt’ (Bamidbar 20:16). (*Malakh* in this verse does not mean an angel but a plenipotentiary.) How, then, is it possible for the Haggadah to say ‘not through a *malakh*’?

“Of course, the answer is simple. There was a *sheli’ach*, but he belonged to the second category, not the first. Had the *sheli’ach* belonged to the first category, he would have deserved credit, because he did it all by himself. He was authorized by the Almighty, but the deeds were his own. Moshe, however, was a *sheli’ach* who served only as a companion for the Almighty. Such a *sheli’ach* does not deserve credit, so his name is not mentioned. Every miracle was performed by the Almighty...

“Note the paradox. On the one hand... Moshe... is the hero of Jewish history... On the other hand, when his assignment on the historical stage was done, the lights dimmed and he

¹⁵ **Ben Avraham – Question:** “Will the *Mashiach* be considered to be a greater teacher than *Moshe Rabbeinu*?” After all, Moshe – seemingly – failed to have his teachings see any significant longevity. The *passuk* says (Devarim 31:29): “*For I know that after my death you will completely corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.*” Yet we know that in *Yemos HaMashiach*, the entire world – both Jews and non-Jews – will attain universal knowledge of HaShem, and that all will be observant of His Torah [(*Yishayahu* 11:9.) “...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (*Yirmiyahu* 31:33) “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will no longer remember their sin.”] So do we dare say that *Moshe Rabbeinu* will be overshadowed by *Mashiach Rabbeinu*? Or will the “success” of the *Mashiach* come about because HaShem will change the rules of the game? Consider the *passuk* (Devarim 30:1-2, 6, 8) “*And it shall come to pass, when all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations, where the Lord your God has driven you, And shall return to the Lord your God, and shall obey his voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul... And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live... And you shall return and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments which I command you this day.*” Thus it seems reasonable to conclude that the longevity of the *Mashiach*’s teachings will be brought about by HaShem’s diminishment of the *Yetzer Hara*, rather than a teaching ability of His *sheli’ach* that is superior to *Moshe Rabbeinu*.

walked off in darkness. **On Pesach night, when we celebrate the exodus, Moshe is not the hero. The *ge'ulah* is credited to one account only – that of G-d.** *Bo el Par'oh*: come with Me; I cannot go without you – yet you will not get any credit. Moshe himself proclaims, in an act of self-effacement, ‘I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has H thrown into the sea’ (Shemos 15:1¹⁶). Moshe claims no credit.

“What, then, is Moshe’s role in Jewish history? Is he completely forgotten and erased? To the contrary... [although] he was not immortalized as a political hero or a strategist... [he] was immortalized as a teacher. We do not say Moshe *Go’aleinu*, or Moshe *Moshi’enu*, or Moshe *Meshi’chenu*; we say Moshe *Rabbeinu*. **Calling him Moshe Go’aleinu. Moshe our Redeemer, would be blasphemy.** Man cannot usurp G-d’s attributes of power. A man who calls himself powerful is nothing but an idiot. A malignant little cell kills the most powerful man, and nothing can stop it. It is ridiculous to speak of man as powerful.

“...Moshe’s name was eliminated from the pages of the Haggadah as if he never existed. But we are a grateful people; we feel very sorry for him on Pesach night... [The only time we find] the name of Moshe in the Haggadah... is not in the Haggadah proper but in a proof-text; ‘They believed in the Lord, and in His servant Moshe’ (Shemos 14:31)...

“...*Kneset Yisroel*... looks for Moshe on Passover night but will never find him.

“*On my bed at night*” – this refers to the night of Egypt; “*I sought him who my heart loves*” – this refers to Moshe; “*I sought him, but I found him not*” (Shir HaShiurim Rabbah 3:1).

“Similarly, when, with G-d’s help, the Haggadah of our final redemption is written, the name of the Mashiach will not be mentioned either.

“‘Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever’ – so let the redeemed of the Lord say” (Tehillim 107:1-2)... Why does it say ‘the redeemed of the Lord,’ and not [simply] ‘Israel’? It is as *Yishayhu* (35:10¹⁷) explains, ‘The redeemed of the Lord shall

¹⁶ **Ben Avraham** – When we have pointed to the Song at the Sea as evidence that all credit belongs to HaShem, as all credit is given to Him – an none to Moshe – in this song, we have been told by Rabbinic lifelong Yidden that our proof is lacking because Moshe himself was singing the song: “Of course Moshe is not going to sing a song about himself,” we have been told. Now Rav Soloveitchik comes and gives authentic Torah credence to our argument. Would the Rabbinic lifelong Yidden like to alter their responses, or are they going to continue their debasement of our arguments?

¹⁷ **Yishayahu 35:4.** Say to those who are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, with a divine recompense; He will come and save you. 5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; the habitation of jackals shall become a pasture for cattle, an enclosure of reeds and rushes. 8. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; and he shall be to them a guide, and fools shall not err in it. 9. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up on it, they shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there; 10. **And the redeemed of the Lord shall return,** and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Rashi, Yishayahu 35:4 – to the hasty of heart Who hurry the redemption and are troubled by its delay. **[with] vengeance He shall come** (lit., vengeance He shall come,) with vengeance He shall come. **the recompense of God** Upon the wicked ([mss.] upon your enemies) He shall come and save you.

Rashi, Yishayahu 35:5 – the eyes of the blind shall be opened Those who were blind, not to recognize (lit., from recognizing) their fear (sic) ([Warsaw:] this fear;) ([mss.] My fear) upon them. **and the ears of the deaf** Who did not hearken to the voice of the prophets until now, will be opened and unstopped, for I will give them a proper spirit to fear Me. He says this concerning Israel, whom he called blind and deaf, as the matter is stated (infra 42:18) “You deaf ones, hearken, etc.”

return’ – [they are] **not** [called] ‘*the redeemed of Eliyahu,*’ nor ‘*the redeemed of the Mashiach,*’ but ‘*the redeemed of the Lord.*’ Therefore, here too it says, ‘*the redeemed of the Lord.*’ (Midrash Tehillim, 107)...

“He is called *Moshe Rabbeinu* only in reference to Sinai, not in reference to *Ge’ulas Mitzrayim*. ‘*I stood before the Lord and you ... to show you the word of the Lord (Devarim 5:5)* – I am the mediator between G-d and the congregation, and I told you the word of G-d, so I deserve credit.”

ENDNOTES

Ben Avraham – Regarding the understanding of R. Hillel’s statement, “There will be no Messiah for Israel,” as codified on Sanhedrin 99a, we suggest the following *chiddush* for readers to dismiss without even considering. (Hopefully, after the reader comes to understand [by reading this entire document, and comprehending the consequences thereof] that many of our previous *chiddushim* now have been verified as Torah Thoughts of *Gedolei Yisroel*, this possible *chiddush* will be given some thought BEFORE it is summarily discarded – hopefully.)

Sanhedrin 99a – R. Hillel [not Hillel the Elder, rather a descendant, a grandson of Rebbe] said: *There shall be no Messiah for Israel¹⁸, 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:

Daniel 7:13. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, **one like a son of man¹⁹ came with the clouds of heaven²⁰**, 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.

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:

Ben Avraham – “*and the ears of the deaf*” we suggest might (possibly) refer to those who failed to recognize and comprehend the muted role of the Mashiach in the Ge’ulah Emitas as depicted in the words of the Navi’im, but eventually...

Yishayahu 35:6 – **Then the lame shall skip like a hart, etc.** Israel, who are now lame and weak. We find that he calls the weak with an expression of ‘lame,’ as the matter is stated (above 33:23): “The lame take the prey.” **shall sing in My salvation. the tongue of the mute** The tongue of Israel, who are among the nations as mutes, for they hear their scorn and do not respond. **for water has broken out in the desert** For **My salvation** shall cheer them up, and they shall blossom like a desert wasteland, which thirsts for water, and springs break out into it; i.e., for **salvation** shall sprout for the crushed ones.

¹⁸ [But the Almighty will himself redeem Israel and reign over them (Rashi).]

¹⁹ **Rashi:** This is the king *Mashiach*.

²⁰ “With the clouds of heaven (i.e. suddenly and swiftly)” – this would be a glorious *Ge’ulah*.

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 either 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 *Yemos HaMashiach*, while learning a valuable lesson from the way that R' Yosef reacts to his colleague's statement.

According to *Chazal*, 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*. 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.



Ben Avraham – Below is a personal note regarding our current feelings.

Yisro was already isolated by having given up on the *Avodah Zarah* of the world²¹, and now he chose to exacerbate that isolation by following *Klal Yisroel* into the desert.

Thoughts from a Ger by Yonason Noach ben Avraham

The *passukim* and Rashi state:

Shemos/Exodus 18:5. And Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses **into the wilderness**, where he encamped at the mount of God; 6. And he said to Moses, I your father-in-law Jethro have come to you, and your wife, and her two sons with her.

Rashi, Shemos 18:5 – to the desert (We too know that he was in the desert [without the text stating it explicitly], but **the text is speaking of Jethro’s praise**, that he lived amidst the greatest honor of the world [when he was a “Priest of Midian”], but **his heart prompted him to go forth to the desert wasteland to hear words of Torah**.-[from *Mechilta*]

NOTE: The following comments are the current, general feelings that this *ger* has regarding his “relationship” with the Observant Jewish world as a whole. There are notable exceptions to the following words, and these Yidden certainly know who they are, but when it comes to Torah, this *Yid/Ger* recognizes/emphasizes the *rove* (majority).

Ben Avraham – Yisro’s actions, leaving familiar surroundings and going of his own free-will out into the wilderness, is how this *ger* feels today (5 February 2007); only Yisro came

²¹ **Rashi, Shemos 2:16 – Now the chief of Midian had** Heb. **וְלִכְתֹּךְ מִן־הַמְּדִיָּאִים**, i.e., the most prominent among them. **He had abandoned idolatry, so they banned him from [living with] them.** [From *Shemos Rabbah* 1:32, *Tanchuma, Shemoth* 11] **the troughs** Pools of running water, made in the ground.

to a people that accepted him, and even Moshe listened to a critique brought by Yisro. Thus Yisro might have gone into the wilderness, but he was welcomed into a community within that wilderness. This *ger* has left his family and friends, he has become estranged to all whom he knew before, because – like Yisro – he recognized the *na'arishkeit* of the false religion that he had been raised amidst, and he left that *avodah zarah* in order to seek HaShem and His Torah. However, once he discovered HaShem and His Torah, he was told that the same senses he used to ferret out the inconsistencies between his former religion and *Yiddishkeit* will not be of use to him now. “There are no contradictions between the sages,” he is told, “only ‘seeming contradictions that our puny minds cannot possibly fathom.’” “There are no inconsistencies between *chazal*,” he is told, “only *machloksim* that will be resolved by Eliyahu HaNavi when he returns.” “Your days of finding contradictions and inconsistencies are over, dear convert,” he is told. “Now you must put complete faith in the sages and set aside any ‘seeming contradictions,’ and ‘seemingly specious opinions and teachings,’ because your mind cannot grasp the nuances of the sages.”

In other words, this *ger* is being told, loudly and clearly, “You discover HaShem and His Torah? Great! Now shut up.” If this *ger* were a “good *Yid*” he would sit back, put blind faith in the sages of today and the past, and wistfully perform his *Avodas HaShem*. But this *ger* cannot just sit back and make assumptions about the validity of teachings and opinions that are *bona fide* contradictions (and if we are told to place total faith in our sages, then who are we to tell Jews who have been suckered into believing in a “Dead Jew on a Stick,” Jews for Jesus who have placed their faith in Christian “sages,” to disregard the ‘teachings of those sages’?). And what is this *ger* to do about the inconsistencies and contradictions he has discovered in today’s Judaism? The problem is, that today’s *Yiddisha* world is made up of competing Judaisms, and just as Yisro had to sift through all of the *avodah zarah* in the world in order to come to the truth of HaShem, this *ger* is faced with sifting through all of the various flavors of *Yiddishkeit* in order to glean the wheat from the chaff of the Torah as it has been augmented, commented upon, undergone novelization, and fenced-in for over 3300 years.

Now, before the reader assembles a *bais din* to have this *ger* excommunicated, please consider the statement “today’s *Yiddisha* world is made up of competing Judaisms (and thus, competing Torahs)” in light of the following *bona fide* Torah teaching:

HaShem’s Torah admonishes us (Devarim 17:11) “According to the sentence of the Torah which they shall teach you, and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do; you shall not decline from the sentence which they shall declare to you, to the right hand, nor to the left.” The *Midrash Sifrei* comments that “you shall not decline...” constitutes a negative commandment.

Ben Avraham – What is the intent of this commandment, and what – if any – weight does this negative precept carry today? After all, Jews live in a world two thousand years removed from dwelling in our land, and we have not had a functioning Sanhedrin for the vast majority of this exile. What have these factors meant to this commandment, and how have we suffered because of the dilution of the enforceability of this important safeguard? Consider the following:

The Chinnuch teaches us (#496): “[T]hat we are restricted not to differ with the masters of the Oral Tradition (The Great Bais Din, The Sanhedrin), and [we are] not to alter their words or evade their charge about any subject of the Torah... At the root of the precept lies the reason that the minds and views of people are different from one another; many minds will never be able to accord about things. Well, the Sovereign Master of all, blessed is He, knew that if the meaning of the verses of the Torah were given over into the hand of each and every human being [to decide], every man according to his intelligence, every one of them would explain the words of

the Torah according to his reasoning, and controversy would multiply in Israel (Jewry) about the meaning of the precepts. And thus the Torah would become as [though it were] many Torahs.”

Ben Avraham – The *Chinnuch* couples the above precept with the precept of following the majority (#78) as provided below:

“Therefore our G-d, being the Supreme Master of all the wisdoms, made our Torah, the Torah of truth, whole and perfect with this precept. For by it He commanded us to act according to the true, traditional explanation received and accepted by our early Sages. And in every generation we are likewise to hearken to the existing Sages who received their words in the Oral Tradition, drank deeply from their written works, and went through much toil, days and nights, to comprehend the depth of their words and the wondrous meaning of their views.

“With this ‘rule of agreement’ we will arrive at the way of truth in the knowledge of the Torah. Otherwise, if we will be swayed to follow our thoughts and the paucity of our mind, we will not succeed in anything. In keeping with the truth and great praiseworthy vale of this precept, the Sages of blessed memory said (*Sifre, Devarim* #154): ‘you shall not turn aside from it either to the right or to the left’ – even if they tell you about the right that it is left, do not swerve from their order. In other words, even if they should be in error about one particular thing, it is not right for us to oppose them, but we are rather to act according to their error. It is better to suffer one error, all being thus always subject to their good thought, and not that everyone should act according to his thinking. For this would lead to the ruin of the religion, dissension in the heart of the people, and the total loss of the nation.

[To forestall these potentialities] “[T]he meaning of the Torah was given over to the Sages of Jewry [to determine and maintain]. And they were likewise commanded that a minority group among the Sages should always be subordinate to the majority group... deciding according to the majority (#78).”

Ben Avraham – It is a fact that we have not had a Sanhedrin in almost 2000 years, and if one of the reasons for the Sanhedrin was to keep Torah as One Torah, then it is reasonable to say that “Torah” is no longer one. The truth is, there is only one Torah, but – as the *Chinnuch* teaches us – different people will have different ways of interpreting pieces of Torah. And once implemented, and attributed to a sage, today’s *Yiddishkeit* seems to be powerless (*with but a few exceptions*) to speak the phrase, “*That teaching, that understanding is not kosher Torah.*”

Conclusion: This *ger* has the responsibility of remaining true to his desire to seek out the Truth of HaShem and His Torah, and in order to proceed he has “ground rules” of:

a) Going with the earlier authoritative source over a later source. If an earlier source has commented clearly on a subject, unless compelled by over-whelming evidence, this *ger* has to discount any and all subsequent sources – no matter how esteemed they may be.

EXAMPLE: Rav Sa’ dia Ga’on (*Emunos V’Deos*) v. Practically every *Yid* alive today on the Torah-Trueness of *Gilgul HaNefesh* (at least how *Gilgul* is [mis]understood today).

b) Looking at words and events as they are depicted in Tanakh, and giving these events (and the way that Tanakh expresses them) precedence over extra-Biblical texts. IF the Torah is the “Outline” of HaShem’s Law, THEN the most important details and understandings should be able to be found within that “Outline,” and thus we give priority to that which was written (by actual *navi’im*) over that which was later codified by those who were not *navi’im*. This should not be understood to be a denigration of the Oral Law, but rather a position of hierarchy.

c) We understand that portions of Torah and *Nach* were written cryptically so as to allow for freedom of choice, to allow for room to error. However, *Pirkei Avos* 1:11 and *Pirkei Avos* 2:5 state that Teachers/Sages (as opposed to *navi'im*) must take particular care with their words so that they do not convey a meaning that is contrary to their intent. When learning *Tanakh* we might be confused by some of the wordings of some of the *passukim*, and this is why we need to rely upon our *Meforshim* to explain the *pasukim* to us. But when a single *passuk* can have a *p'shat* of either/or HaShem or *Mashiach*, this *ger* feels that a line of clarity has potentially been crossed. **If a *passuk* can mean anything, then ultimately it means nothing.** Yes, yes, we understand the seventy facets of the Torah, but – as Rashi states – a *passuk* can never leave its plain meaning. If we have a *passuk* with a *p'shat* of HaShem, which also has a midrashic understanding of *Mashiach*, we would be able to accept that. But when different *Meforshim* argue, and claim that the *p'shat* is either/or (HaShem or *Mashiach*) then we are very troubled – especially considering that the largest single religion in the world fails to make any distinction between their misinterpretation of HaShem and their misinterpretation of *Mashiach*. (And keeping in mind that the most “*frum*” members of that religion want nothing more than to convert every Jewish man, woman, and child to their way of [mis]thinking!)

d) There can be no comparison between our Creator, Sustainer, and Orchestrator and any of His creations – no matter what level that creation has attained. In other words (unlike Christianity) there is a difference between HaShem and His *Mashiach*, and we would desire that any and all writings produced by Jews throughout the ages should (or should have) made this distinction clear so that anyone who reads their writings (or hears them speak) will not even come close to mixing the two up.

We request, and look forward to, any and all comments, but request that the responders keep in mind the mind-set of this *ger* as depicted above when they respond. A reply of, “These were great sages, and you have no right o question them,” will be received as tantamount to: “You’ve discovered HaShem and His Torah Great! Now, shut up.”

Good Shabbos,

Yonason Noach ben Avraham

Yisro (Jethro), another Ger, another Jew by Choice

[A *Ger* who had sampled all that the man-made religions of the world had to offer, who rejected them all, and a *Ger* who even Moshe Rabbeinu listened to!]

Shemos 2:16. And the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock.

Rashi, Shemos 2:16 – Now the chief of Midian had Heb. וַיִּלְכְּהוּ מִדְּבָר, i.e., the most prominent among them. **He had abandoned idolatry, so they banned him from [living with] them.** [From *Exod. Rabbah* 1:32, *Tanchuma, Shemoth* 11] **the troughs** Pools of running water, made in the ground.

Rashi, Shemos 6:25 [And Eleazar Aaron’s son took **one of the daughters of Putiel to wife; and she bore him Phinehas; these are the chiefs of the fathers of the Levites according to their families.**] – **[one] of the daughters of Putiel-** Of the seed of **Jethro, who fattened (וַיִּפְּאֵל) calves for idolatry** (see Rashi on *Exod. 2:16*) and [who was also] of the seed of Joseph, who

defied and fought (וַיִּקְרַח) against his passion [when he was tempted by Potiphar’s wife].-[from B.B. 109b]

Rashi, Shemos 18:11 – Now I know I recognized Him in the past, but now [I recognize Him] even more.-[from Mechilta] **than all the deities This teaches us that he [Jethro] was knowledgeable about every type of idolatry in the world, and there was no pagan deity that he did not worship.**-[from Mechilta]....

Shemos 18:1. When Jethro, **the priest of Midian**, Moses’ father-in-law, heard [understood, comprehended, and took to heart] of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt... 9. And Jethro rejoiced because of all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered from the hand of the Egyptians. 10. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who has saved you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of Pharaoh, who has saved the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11. **Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods**; for in the thing where they dealt proudly he was above them.

Shemos 18:13. And it came to pass on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood by Moses from the morning to the evening. 14. And **when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that you do to the people? Why do you sit by yourself alone, and all the people stand by you from morning to evening?** 15. And Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God; 16. When they have a matter, they come to me; and I judge between one and another, and I make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. 17. And **Moses’ father-in-law said to him, The thing that you do is not good.** 18. You will certainly wear away, both you, and this people who are with you; for this thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it yourself alone... 24. So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said.

Pinchas (Phinehas), a Jew whose Emunas HaShem, Emunas HaTorah, and Emunas HaEmes outweighed his allegiance to the leadership of his day [and who also was an offspring of Yisro, if not physically, then most certainly spiritually!]

Bamidbar 25:1. And Israel stayed in Shittim, and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab... 6. And, behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the people of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the Tent of Meeting. 7. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; 8. And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague ceased from the people of Israel... 10. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 11. **Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger away from the people of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the people of Israel in my jealousy.** 12. Therefore say, Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace... 14. And **the name of the Israelite who was slain**, who was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a father’s house among the Simeonites.

Tehillim 106:30. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment; and so the plague was stayed. 31. And that was counted to him for righteousness to all generations for evermore.

Rashi, Bamidbar 25:7 – Phinehas...saw He saw **the deed** and reminded himself of the law. He said to Moses, “I learned from you, ‘If someone cohabits with an Aramean [heathen]

woman, zealots have a right to strike him [dead].’ ” He replied to him, “*Let the one who reads the letter be the agent to carry it out.*” Immediately, “he took a spear in his hand....”-[Sanh. 82a]

Rashi, Bamidbar 25:11 – Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the kohen Since the tribes were disparaging him, saying, **Have you seen the son of Puti, whose mother’s father [Jethro] fattened (זָבַח) calves for idols** (See Rashi, Exod. 6:25), **and who killed a chieftain of an Israelite tribe?** For this reason, Scripture traces his pedigree to Aaron.- [Sanh. 82b, Num. Rabbah 21:3, Mid. Tanchuma Pinchas 2] **by his zealously avenging Me** Heb. אֶת-קִנְיָתִי בְקִנְאוֹ, **by his avenging My vengeance, by his releasing the wrath that I should have released.** The term קִנְיָה always denotes someone motivated to take vengeance for some matter, in old French, *enprenemant*.

Rashi, Bamidbar 25:14 – **The name of the Israelite man** In the place it [Scripture] traces the lineage of the righteous man for praise, it traces the lineage of the wicked man for shame.-[Mid. Tanchuma Pinchas 2, Num. Rabbah 21:3] **the chieftain of the Simeonite paternal house** Of one of the five paternal houses belonging to the tribe of Simeon. Another interpretation: **To proclaim the praise of Phinehas, for although he [Zimri] was a chieftain, he [Phinehas] did not refrain from acting zealously against a profanation of the Divine Name.** This is why Scripture tells us the name of the one who was slain.-[Mid. Aggadah]



Ben Avraham – Below is an outline of a “work in progress.” The items in “red” are those that we are having difficulty with.

A Commentary on
Kol HaTorah Kulah
A Library of
Torah Hashkafa & Halachah in its Entirety

Preface Volume

- #) *Yisro, Pinchas & the Love of Emes*
- #) *Author’s Introduction*
 - #) *An Open Letter to Klal Yisroel*
 - #) *Regarding the Footer*

Table of Contents of “A Commentary on Kol HaTorah Kulah”

An Outline of “A Commentary on Kol HaTorah Kulah”

- #) *An Expanded Outline of “A Commentary on Kol HaTorah Kulah”*

Volume 1

The Gallus Effect: The Erosion of Hashkafah Emes in the Edomite Gallus

- #) *Yisro, Pinchas & the Love of HaShem, His Torah & Emes*
- #) *Author’s Introduction*
 - #) *The Rambam’s 13 Principles*
 - #) *Pirkei Avos 6:6 “The Forty-Eight Ways to Wisdom”*
 - #) *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*
 - #) *The First Two Commandments [Heard by all Yisroel at Mt. Sinai]*
 - #) *The Six Constant Mitzvos*
 - #) *The Six Remembrances*

Chapter 1) The belief in a Creator/Sustainer/Orchestrator

- #) HaShem, Moshe & Mashiach: Who or who*
- #) Miracles: Moshe, Chachamim, Rabbaim, Mashiach*
- #) Blurring the Lines: HaShem & Mashiach*

Chapter 2) The belief in the Uniqueness of HaShem & the He alone is G-d

Chapter 3) The belief that HaShem is not physical or affected by physicality

- #) “Literal” Chelek Eloka Me’ma’al*
- #) Emanation Theology v. Yaish M’Ayin (Creatio Ex Nihilo)*

Chapter 4) The belief that HaShem existed before all else that He created

Chapter 5) The belief that it is to HaShem alone that we should pray

- #) Selichos addressed to/through Melachim*

Chapter 6) The belief that the words of the Prophets are all true

Chapter 7) The belief that Moshe Rabbeinu was the “Father of all Prophets”

Chapter 8) The belief that the Written Torah has not been altered since Sinai

- #) Rules of the Mesorah; Emunas Chachamim*
- #) Kabbalah for the Ordinary Man*
- #) T’shuvah Shalaymah: To HaShem & His Torah*

Chapter 9) The belief that neither the Written nor Oral Torahs can be changed

- #) The Or HaChayim: Bamidbar 3:45*
- #) Teachers, keep your answers real*

Chapter 10) The belief that HaShem has foreknowledge of all that happens

Chapter 11) The belief that HaShem will reward and/or punish

- #) Gilgul HaNefesh & the “Teflon” Neshamah*
- #) Kiruv & Tochachah – what are errant Yidden “Returning” to?*

Chapter 12) The belief in the Messianic Age

- #) HaShem & Mashiach: Who or who*
- #) Mashiach Mishugas*
- #) Rebbe Mishugas*
- #) T’shuvah Shalaymah & Repeating the mistakes of the past*
- #) One Heart, One Way & the Renewed Sanhedrin*

Chapter 13) The belief in the eventual resurrection of the dead

#) Pirkei Avos: Emulation & Advice from our Sages

#) Wrong Turns in Hashkafah: The Impact of the Nations on Torah

- #) The Drive for Chiddushim*
- #) Kabbalah*
- #) The Zohar*
- #) Chassidus*
- #) Biography & Hashkafah of Author*