

## MESSIANIC ASPIRATIONS<sup>1</sup>

*A star has shot forth from Jacob, and a scepter has arisen from Israel*  
(Numbers 24:17).

Yankel was an impoverished clay digger in a small hamlet in the backwoods of Poland. One night he dreamed that a chest of gold was buried beneath a certain bridge in the city of Lublin. The next morning Yankel took his few zlotys of savings, tied his tools and some provisions in a bundle, and set out for the distant city.

After wandering the streets of Lublin for many hours he located the bridge of his dream. There it was, exactly as he had seen it, and there was the spot under which his fortune awaited him. But the bridge was manned twenty-four hours a day; in vain did wait through the night for the guard to take a nap or abandon his post. Still, Yankel continued to haunt the bridge, determined not to return home empty-handed.

Eventually, the guard approached him. "What are you up to?" he demanded. "You've been hanging around here with that shovel of yours for several days now. There's no digging allowed here, you know." Not knowing what to say, Yankel told him the truth: that he had dreamed that there was treasure buried under the bridge. The guard burst out laughing. "Dreams! Who pays attention to dreams of that sort? Why, only last night I dreamed that in the home of some clay digger by the name of Yankel, in the hamlet of Chozhky, there is a chest of gold buried in the wall behind the stove! So, do I drop everything, leave my job and family, set out for some settlement hundreds of miles away to look for this Yankel and break down the walls of his home?"

Without a word, Yankel returned home and broke down the wall behind his stove. That was the last time he raised a shovel, or any tool heavier than a soup spoon, in his hands. The gold was there, and Yankel became a wealthy man.

## REDEMPTION FROM WITHIN

Several times a year, we do a very pretentious thing. Standing before the opened Ark in the synagogue, we pray:

*May it be fulfilled in us the verse, "The spirit of Gd shall rest upon him; a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and fear of Gd."*<sup>(1)</sup>

The verse cited in this prayer, Isaiah 11:3, **is from the prophet's description of Mashiach, the promised redeemer of Israel and of humanity.**

This is the person of whom it is said that **they will be "greater than Abraham, higher than Moses, and loftier than the supernal angels."**<sup>(2)</sup> Yet each and every one of us expresses the desire that Isaiah's words be realized in their own self!

As pretentious as it may seem, the aspiration expressed in this prayer is rooted in the words of the sages. When Balaam prophesied on Mashiach, proclaiming, "A star has shot forth from Jacob, and a scepter has arisen from Israel"<sup>(3)</sup> **the Talmud applies the verse to each individual Jew.**<sup>(4)</sup> Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, explained that **at the core of each and every individual soul is a spark of the soul of Mashiach.** When a person develops the divine goodness that is the essence of their own being, they realize their individual Mashiach and bring about a state of redemption in their personal universe.<sup>(5)</sup> Indeed, Israel's first redeemer, Moses, describes his people as "This nation of six hundred thousand, whom I am within" (Num 11:21). Had there not been a spark of Moses' soul within the soul of each individual Jew, Moses could not have delivered them from the physical and spiritual bondage of Egypt. For redemption is something that comes from within, not the unilateral achievement of a mythical messiah descending from the heavens.

## GRASPING THE PARTICLE

The "spark of Mashiach" at the core of every soul means that we each possess not only the means for personal perfection but also hold the key for the ultimate perfection of the entirety of G-d's creation.

The Torah relates that in the beginning of beginning, the earth was still formless, and void and darkness covered the deep, "the spirit of G-d hovered upon the waters." (Gen 1:2) "The spirit of G-d," explains the Midrash, "is the soul of Mashiach."<sup>(6)</sup> **The soul of Mashiach is the very essence of creation, the vision of goodness and harmony with which G-d preceded and imbued His work.** And, as the Baal Shem Tov pointed out, "The essence of a thing, when you grasp a particle of it, you grasp it all."<sup>(9)</sup>

When we waken our personal spark of this essence and make it real in our own life, we stimulate the revelation of the universal Mashiach—the global leader in whom the soul of Mashiach will manifest itself and, in turn, ignite the divine spark within each and every individual, bringing peace and perfection to the entire world.<sup>(10)</sup>

(1) From the prayer recited prior to the reading of the Torah on the festivals.

(2) *Yalkut Shimoni* on Isaiah 52:13.

(3) Numbers 24:7. See Onkelos' translation of verse, and Rashi's and Nachmanides' commentaries on it; *Ta'anit* 4:5; Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings*, 11:1).

(4) *Y. Ma'aser Sheni* [The Second Tithe] 4:6.

(5) Quoted in *Meor Einayim* [Light of the Eyes], end of Parashat Pinchas.

(6) *Bereishit Rabbah*, 2:4.

<sup>1</sup> Yanki Tauber, *The Inside Story, Numbers*, (Meaningful Life Center), pp. 186-189.

- (9) *Keter Shem Tov* [The Crown of the Good Name], addendum, section 116.  
(10) Based on *Sefer HaSichot* [Book of Conversations] 5748, vol. 2, p. 396; *Torah Menachem Hitva'aduyot* [Meetings] 5743, vol. 3, p. 1315.

1. *Without a word, Yankel returned home and broke down the wall behind his stove. That was the last time he raised a shovel, or any tool heavier than a soup spoon, in his hands. The gold was there, and Yankel became a wealthy man.*

a. This story is told in the fully illustrated children's book "The Treasure" by Uri Shulevitz, but it ends differently:

*In Thanksgiving, he built a house of prayer, and in one of its corners he put an inscription: **Sometimes one must travel far to discover what is near.***

*Isaac sent the captain of the guards a priceless ruby. And for the rest of his days, he lived in contentment, and he never was poor again.*

1) Deuteronomy 30:11-14

<sup>11</sup>Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you **or beyond your reach**. <sup>12</sup>**It is not up in heaven**, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" <sup>13</sup>**Nor is it beyond the sea**, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" <sup>14</sup>No, **the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.**

—Often, what we seek is close at hand, not distant.

2) Luke 15:11-32

<sup>11</sup>Yeshua continued: "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, **set off for a distant country** and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup>After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>"**When he came to his senses**, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup>**I will set out and go back to my father** and say to him: Father, **I have sinned against heaven and against you**. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' <sup>20</sup>So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was

filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup>"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup>Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup>**For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**' So they

3) Romans 10:5-13 (CJB)

<sup>5</sup>For Moshe writes about the righteousness grounded in the *Torah* that the person who does these things will attain life through them. <sup>6</sup>Moreover, the righteousness grounded in trusting says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend to heaven?'"—that is, to bring the Messiah down—<sup>7</sup>or, "'Who will descend into Sh'ol?'"—that is, to bring the Messiah up from the dead. <sup>8</sup>What, then, does it say? "**The word is near you**, in your mouth and in your heart" (Deu 30:11-14)—that is, the word about trust which we proclaim, namely, <sup>9</sup>that if you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. <sup>10</sup>For **with the heart one goes on trusting** and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance. <sup>11</sup>For the passage quoted says that *everyone* who rests his trust on him will not be humiliated (Isa 28:16). <sup>12</sup>That means that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—*ADONAI* is the same for everyone, rich toward everyone who calls on him, <sup>13</sup>since *everyone* who calls on the name of *ADONAI* will be delivered (Joel 2:32).

2. *The verse cited in this prayer, Isaiah 11:3, is from the prophet's description of Mashiach, the promised redeemer of Israel and of humanity.*

a. Isaiah 11:1-9

<sup>1</sup>A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. <sup>2</sup>The Spirit of the LORD will rest **on him**—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—<sup>3</sup>and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears; <sup>4</sup>but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. <sup>5</sup>Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his

waist. <sup>6</sup>The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. <sup>7</sup>The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. <sup>8</sup>The infant will play near the cobra's den, the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. <sup>9</sup>They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for **the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.**

**Targum Jonathan,<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 11:1-9**

<sup>1</sup>And a King shall come forth from the sons of Jesse, and from his children's children **the Messiah shall be anointed** (or "exalted"). <sup>2</sup>And there shall dwell upon Him the Spirit of prophecy from before the Lord: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. <sup>3</sup>He shall bring him to the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge according to the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears. <sup>4</sup>But with righteousness shall He judge the poor and reprove with faithfulness the needy of the earth; and He shall smite the sinners of the earth with the word of His mouth, and with the speech of His lips He shall slay **the wicked.** <sup>(2)</sup> <sup>5</sup>And the righteous shall be round about Him, and those that work in faith shall draw nigh unto Him. <sup>(3)</sup> **In the days of the Messiah** of Israel peace shall be multiplied in the earth. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall dwell with the kid; and the calf, and the lion, and the fatling together; and a little sucking child shall be leading them. <sup>7</sup>And the cow and the bear shall feed together; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. <sup>8</sup>And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put forth his hand on the glistening pupil. <sup>9</sup>They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the fear of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

(2) (The translator has) followed here ... the text of the Royal Polyglot<sup>3</sup>. In ... later Jewish editions, we have an ... interpolation, they add "Armillus," by whom the rabbis mean him whom the (Apostolic Writings) calls "the Antichrist," who, as they dream, **shall slay their expected suffering Messiah, the son of Joseph; but after that, the Messiah, the Son of David, shall slay this Antichrist.**

(3) Literally, "the workers of faith," *i.e.*, those that work with or in faith.

3. *This is the person of whom it is said that they will be "greater than Abraham, higher than Moses, and loftier than the supernal angels."*<sup>(2)</sup> *Yet each and every one of us expresses the desire that Isaiah's words be realized in their own self!*

a. John 8:51-59

<sup>51</sup>Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death."

<sup>52</sup>At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. <sup>53</sup>**Are you greater than our father Abraham?** He died, and so did the prophets. **Who do you think you are?**" <sup>54</sup>Yeshua replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. <sup>55</sup>Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. <sup>56</sup>**Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.**" <sup>57</sup>"You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" <sup>58</sup>"Very truly I tell you," Yeshua answered, "before Abraham was born, I AM!" <sup>59</sup>At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Yeshua hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

1) **56-58: Abraham ... see my day**, this may be a reference to the tradition described in *T. Abr.*,<sup>4</sup> in which God gives Abraham a tour of the heavens and provides him with knowledge of the final judgement, before his own death. *I am, an allusion (remez) to God's revelation to Moses at the burning bush* (Ex. 3:14), also perhaps a claim to preexistence (1:1-3).<sup>5</sup>

2) **ἐγὼ εἰμὶ (ego emi)**—the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew **אֲנִי הוּא אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי (eh-yeh asher eh-yeh [I AM WHO I AM])**, the Name the Angel of the LORD told Moses was His Name (Exo 3:14), *i.e.*, God's Name, the Tetragrammaton, generally rendered by the transliterated Hebrew letters: YHVH.

3) John 1:1-3

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

2 The Targum Jonathan is the Aramaic translation of the Nevi'im (Prophets) section of the Hebrew Bible employed in Lower Mesopotamia ("Babylonia").

3 A *polyglot* is a codex (book) that contains side-by-side versions of the same text in several different languages.

4 The Testament of Abraham is a pseudepigraphic text of the (Hebrew Bible), probably composed in the 1st or 2nd century CE. **It is of Jewish origin** and is considered part of the apocalyptic literature. While it is regarded as scripture by Beta Israel Ethiopian Jews, it is not accepted by any other Jewish or Christian groups. The text gives an account of Abraham's experiences at death, where he is informed by the angel Michael that he must die, but Abraham refuses to give up his spirit.

5 Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, (Oxford University Press), p. 177.

and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning.

<sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

b. Hebrews 3:2-3

<sup>2</sup>(Yeshua) was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. <sup>3</sup>Yeshua has been found **worthy of greater honor than Moses**, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

c. Hebrews 1:1-9

<sup>1</sup>In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. <sup>3</sup>The Son **is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being**, sustaining all things by his powerful word ... <sup>4</sup>So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

<sup>5</sup>For to which of the **angels** did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? (Psa 2:7) Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? (2Sam 7:14) <sup>6</sup>And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's **angels** worship him." <sup>7</sup>In speaking of the **angels** he says, "He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire" (Psa 104:4).

<sup>8</sup>But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. <sup>9</sup>You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; **therefore God, your God**, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy" (Psa 45:6-7) ...

<sup>13</sup>To which of the **angels** did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? (Psa 110:1)

4. *Had there not been a spark of Moses' soul within the soul of each individual Jew, Moses could not have delivered them from the physical and spiritual bondage of Egypt. For redemption is something that comes from within, **not the unilateral achievement of a mythical messiah descending from the heavens.***

a. Daniel 7:13-14

<sup>13</sup>In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a **son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven**. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup>He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

1) "Son of Man" is the most supernatural messianic title in all of Scripture. **It is much more supernatural than "Son of God"** because the Daniel 7 figure comes on the clouds and is not a son of man (that is, a human being), but one "like a son of man."<sup>6</sup>

2) Matthew 24:27-31

<sup>27</sup>**For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man ...**

<sup>29</sup>"Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." <sup>30</sup>**Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn** when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup>And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (cf., Zech 12:10).

3) Matthew 25:31-34

<sup>31</sup>**When the Son of Man comes in his glory**, and all the angels with him, **he will sit on his glorious throne**. <sup>32</sup>**All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats**. <sup>33</sup>He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. <sup>34</sup>Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'

b. Genesis 49:10

<sup>10</sup>The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, **until he to whom it belongs shall come** and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

OKE—**until the Messiah come**, whose is the kingdom, and unto whom shall be the obedience of the nations (or, whom the peoples shall obey).

PJE—**till the time that the King the Messiah, shall come ...**

c. Deuteronomy 18:15

<sup>15</sup>The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

d. Isaiah 9:7

<sup>7</sup>**Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end**. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, estab-

lishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

e. Isaiah 11:10

<sup>10</sup>In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; **the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.**

f. Isaiah 42:1

<sup>1</sup>Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and **he will bring justice to the nations.**

g. Isaiah 59:16

<sup>16</sup>He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so **his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him.**

h. Jeremiah 23:5

<sup>5</sup>"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, **a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.**

i. Malachi 3:1

<sup>1</sup>"I will send my messenger (Elijah), who will prepare the way before me. **Then suddenly** the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

5. *The Torah relates that in the beginning of beginning, the earth was still formless, and void and darkness covered the deep, "the spirit of G-d hovered upon the waters." (Gen 1:2) "The spirit of G-d," explains the Midrash, "is the soul of Mashiach."<sup>(8)</sup> **The soul of Mashiach is the very essence of creation, the vision of goodness and harmony with which G-d preceded and imbued His work.***

a. Colossians 1:15-20

<sup>15</sup>The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For **in him all things were created:** things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in him all things hold together ... <sup>19</sup>For God was pleased **to have all his fullness dwell in him,** <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.