

SEUDAT MASHIACH - FEAST OF THE MESSIAH
CONCLUDING PASSOVER BY HONORING MESSIAH YESHUA

BY HANNAH NESHER

As we come to the conclusion of the great Biblical festival of Passover (Pesach), there is yet one final feast to be celebrated. Seudat Mashiach (Feast of Messiah) is a Hasidic Jewish custom, initiated by the founder of the Jewish Hassidic movement, Rabbi **Yisroel (Israel) ben Eliezer**, also called **Baal Shem Tov** or **Besht**, a Jewish mystical rabbi who lived from August 25, 1698 – May 22, 1760.

This traditional ‘Feast of Moshiach (Messiah in Hebrew)’, includes a festival meal, songs, matzah (unleavened bread) and four cups of wine in anticipation of the future redemption with the Messiah.

This year, Seudat Mashiach will take place on April 22nd in the evening, on the eighth day of Passover.



Photo: Baal Shem Tov

Outside the Land of Israel, in the Diaspora, the eighth day of Passover is also celebrated. This extra day, called Acharon shel Pesach, is devoted to the Messiah (‘Moshiach’ in Hebrew). The Torah readings for this day are Messianic Prophecies and the promise of the Messianic era.

Why did the founder of the Chasidic movement institute a custom dedicated to the Messiah? Just as the first days of Passover focus on Israel’s redemption from Egypt, explained the Baal Shem Tov, so too should the last days center upon the ultimate redemption that is to come. Therefore at the close of the holiday of Pesach (Passover), a festive meal is dedicated to the coming of the Messiah.

Throughout the festival of Pesach, we are made aware of our need of redemption. At the opening Seder meal, we focus on our enslavement in Egypt and how, against all odds, God delivered us as a nation. Therefore, Pesach reminds us - even in a world troubled by natural disasters, wars, famine, pestilence, injustice and corruption – that with God there is always hope. Since the Seudat Mashiach is only celebrated by Jewish people in exile, outside the land of Israel, the last day also celebrates the hope of a future deliverance from this state of exile and a promise of a better world.

The irony here, of course, is that the door at this time remains open for any Jewish person in any nation of the world, to give up their place in exile and to come home to the nation of Israel – and yet so many remain in their comfort zones outside the Land.

Celebrating this ‘Messianic Feast’ helps to raise Jewish awareness of the very concept of the Messiah, of which many are quite uninformed. Raising this eighth day from the mundane to the

level of holiness can be a way of bringing an entire segment of the Jewish population to think about and rejoice in the coming of the Messiah.

Some Christians are unaware of the fact that the Messiah, or Moshiach, is a fundamental ancient concept in traditional Judaism. Indeed, it has been said, half in jest, that when Yeshua returns, the one question that will be asked of him by the Jewish people is whether or not it is his first or second visit to earth. When Yeshua returns, they will see and know that His coming was preceded 2,000 years ago as the Passover Lamb of God who was slain for our personal redemption.

Belief in an eventual coming of a Messiah is one of the thirteen foundational principles of the Jewish faith, according to Rambam, Hebrew acronym for "**R**abbi **M**osheh **B**en **M**aimon", one of the most prolific and well respected Torah scholars of the Middle Ages.

Also, in a prayer called the Shemoneh Esrei, one of the things Jewish people pray for three times a day is for the coming of the mashiach. The term 'mashiach' משיח in Hebrew means literally, '**anointed one**', from the practice of anointing the Kings of Israel with oil; therefore the 'mashiach' will be the one anointed as King of Kings in the end of days.

This word is closely related in the Hebrew to the word, Moshiah, which means 'to save'; therefore the Messiah can be both the Anointed One and Savior. However, the Christian concept of the Savior and the Jewish concept of Messiah differ in many ways.

What Will the Mashiach Do? According to Jewish beliefs, the Messiah will come after a time of war and suffering (Ezekiel 38:16) and there are several things that the Messiah, if he is genuine, must accomplish:

1. The Messiah will bring about spiritual and political redemption of the Jewish people. He will bring the Jews home to Israel and restore Jerusalem (Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4-5).
2. The Messiah will establish and rule over Jerusalem as the center of all world government for Jews as well as Gentiles (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1).
3. The Messiah will rebuild the Holy Temple and res-establish Temple worship and sacrifices (Jeremiah 33:18).
4. The Messiah will restore Jewish law as the rule of the Land and establish a religious court system (Jeremiah 33:15).
5. The Messiah will bring peace to Israel and the world

Most Jewish people do not believe that Jesus (Yeshua) is the Messiah because he did not fulfill this mission. Besides the issue that a Savior who is both human and Divine who dies for our sins is a foreign concept in traditional Judaism, the fact that Yeshua has not accomplished most of these ideals or goals makes him unacceptable as 'mashiach' to most Jewish people. Many others throughout Jewish history, have either claimed to be the mashiach, or had followers who claimed him as the mashiach: Shimeon Bar Kokhba, Shabbatai Tzvi, and many others. Most were imprisoned, killed, or converted to various religions to escape punishment or death.

Even today, all over Israel, are posters and signs proclaiming a certain man as ‘Melech Mashiach’ (King Messiah): Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, also known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe or just the Rebbe among his followers. Rabbi Schneerson was born in the Soviet Union on April 5th, 1902, and became a prominent Chassidic rabbi – the seventh and last Chassidic leader (rebbe) of the Chabad-Lubavitch sect of Judaism. After the death of his father-in-law in 1951, Schneerson became the leader of the Lubavitch movement until he died in 1994.

Although he worked to promote traditional Judaism and moral values and contributed greatly to the world-wide Jewish community and beyond, he never announced himself as the Jewish messiah, as some of his followers claimed; and in fact Rabbi Schneerson discouraged all such talk as foolish and unfounded.

In contrast, Yeshua clearly and openly proclaimed himself to be the Messiah that the Jewish people were eagerly anticipating, patiently waiting and passionately longing for. When Yeshua met the Samaritan woman at the well, he spoke to her about the living water of the Spirit that would quench her thirst forever.



“The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Mashiach) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Yeshua declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” (John 4:25-26)

Yeshua also publicly proclaimed his Messianic mission in the synagogue. When he was called for his aliyah (to read from the Torah scroll) in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom, he read the well-known Messianic prophecy from the writings of Isaiah (61):

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19) To everyone’s amazement, this simple carpenter, son of Joseph, then rolled up the scroll and sat down, saying, **“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:21)**

Indeed, what the Bible has to say about the Messiah is quite different than what is commonly believed about the Messiah in traditional Judaism. With so many false Messiah’s out there, how can we recognize the true Messiah? How can we be sure that Yeshua is truly the ‘moshiach’ or know that someone like Rabbi Schneerson is not?

Yeshua himself has warned us to beware of numerous false Messiahs and false prophets that would arise in the last days, even performing signs and wonders to deceive people, even the very elect. **“Yeshua answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.” (Matthew 24:4-5)**

“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time.” (Matthew 24:23-25) The fact that so many people in Israel and around the world believe that the late Rabbi Schneerson is the Messiah is one more sign that we are truly in the end times. Jewish people have looked for centuries for a Messianic deliverer who would bring world peace.

How can we distinguish the ‘real Messiah’ from all ‘pseudo-Messiah’s’? Thankfully we have the answer in the Bible. His entire ancestry, birth, character, teaching, ministry, life, death, burial and resurrection has been written by 25 Jewish writers even 500 years before his birth.

There are at least 333 Messianic prophecies that complete the description of the real Messiah in Jewish Scriptures. The following is a list of just a few of these which point to Yeshua as ‘Mashiach’ and disqualify Rabbi Schneerson or other ‘pseudo-messiah’s’.

1. He will be born to a virgin and will be called God With Us (Immau-El) (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23)
2. He will be born in Beit-Lechem (House of Bread - Bethlehem) (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1)
3. He will be despised and rejected by his own people (Isaiah 53:3, John 1:11, John 5:43)
4. He will suffer terribly (Isaiah 53:3, Matthew 26:38)
5. He will be pierced and wounded for our sins (Isaiah 53:5, Psalm 22:16, Luke 23:33)
6. He will take upon himself the punishment that we all deserve (Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24)
7. He will not open his mouth in his own defense (Isaiah 53:7, Matthew 27:12-14)
8. He will die a violent, premature death (Isaiah 53:8,12, Luke 23:46)
9. He will die with the wicked but be buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9, Matthew 27:57-60)
10. He will be raised from the dead to life (Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:29-32, Matthew 28:5-6)
11. He will sit on the throne of His father, David, ruling forever (Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 1:30-33)

Many of these prophecies have already been fulfilled in the true Messiah, Yeshua. Others remain to be completed at his second coming. However, throughout the Feast of Passover, and especially on the last day, Day of Moshiach, let us remember the Lamb of God, whose blood saves us from all sin and judgment. **“And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”** (Luke 22:19)

Thank you for supporting the ministry of Voice for Israel, to help open the eyes of Jewish People to the coming of Yeshua and His death and resurrection at Passover 2,000 years ago, in fulfillment of Passover and Bible prophecy.

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