

The Teachings About Mashiah Ben Yosef

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Part 1

Jewish legends have for centuries discussed that prior to the coming of the Mashiah, the promised son of David who is to rebuild the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, gather in all the exiles of Israel, conquer all of Israel's enemies and to establish G-d's Kingdom on earth, another is to precede him to, as if begin his mission and to prepare his way. This other is also called a Mashiah, but of the tribe of Yosef, as opposed to the tribe of Yehuda. He is the Mashiah Ben Yosef.

The legends, predictions and /or stories about Mashiah Ben Yosef recorded in the Talmud and midrashim are rather consistent in that he is to appear some years before the final Mashiah, Ben David, and to fight the wars of G-d. However unlike his Davidic counterpart, Mashiah Ben Yosef is predicted not to succeed in his endeavors. It is predicted that he is destined to fall in battle over Jerusalem, a victim of the evil emperor of the Edomic Empire, who in Jewish legend is called the Armilus.

The characterization and stories of Mashiah Ben Yosef have long been documented and are available in numerous translations. Yet, as with every legend that predicts an ominous future, its actual interpretations and applications become clouded over time, and thus grows the lack of ability to analyze the legend and to apply its essential teachings to current events and modern times. In light of this, a true understanding of the identity, role and career of Mashiah Ben Yosef might be totally missed unless one seeks to truly understand who he really is, what he really is practically and politically supposed to accomplish, and most importantly, when this is all to come about.

This series is dedicated to unraveling what has unfortunately become the mysterious identity of Mashiah ben Yosef and to enable us to recognize him and with G-d's help contribute to his ever so important task of preparing the world for the acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven to be established with the advent of the true Mashiah ben David.

The original Talmudic / Gaonic era teachings about Mashiah Ben Yosef are relatively few and simple. They contain no involved theology or philosophy, just mere predictions of that which is yet to come. The legends / stories read similar to a Midrash, some more embellished than others, but together they all seem just to be telling a story instead of a involved abstract philosophical lesson.

This is important to keep in mind, for over the last five hundred years, since the advent of the Kabbalah of the Ari'zal, teachings about Mashiah Ben Yosef have proliferated and grown, expanded way out of the original socio-political proportion assigned to them by our Talmudic / Gaonic Sages. I must emphasize from the beginning that according to the original sources, Mashiah Ben Yosef is an actual historical individual who is to come and be active in the political and military realm. His mission and purpose is clear, and all the philosophical and theological embellishments added to his title, mission and purpose may or may not have any foundation in the unfolding political drama that will bring about his advent.

In other words, just because someone says something about the identity and / or purpose of Ben Yosef does not make that statement to be true. Of course, if a statement is made by a great Sage, many will desirously accept it as a Biblical truth. Nonetheless, with all due respect to our great Rabbis, not everything that they say is to be interpreted as either completely metaphorical or completely al pi pshat (straightforward). The words of our Sages have a way to them in that they have multiple layers of meanings. Nonetheless, regardless of all philosophical and spiritual interpretations of messianic teachings, one must above all remember that as RaMBaM has written the words of the Sages regarding messianic matters are merely opinions, and not absolute or obligatory opinions at that.

Discussions about messianic matters, be it Ben Yosef, or Ben David are not matters of Jewish Law (Halakha) and do not fall into the category of belief in the coming of Mashiah which is one of the Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith as outlined by RaMBaM (Maimonides). Messianic discussions are never really clearly set out and explained. There is much confusion about how messianic events will actually unfold in detail. The reason for this as outlined by our Sages should be obvious to all. When we are talking about the future we are talking about the unleashing of a chain of events, which is subject to monumental changes at every moment based upon the behavior of the individuals involved at any given moment.

Mankind, created in G-d's image, has the absolute gift of free will and choice. There is no pre-ordained destiny of doom and gloom to befall us. Although we have prophecy throughout the TaNaKh (Bible) and Talmud that will indeed come about in all their details, nonetheless, the ultimate fulfillment of prophecy is predicated upon the behavior of man.

Just like G-d sent Jonah to the city of Nineveh to proclaim its destruction if they did not repent, so is all other Biblical prophecy incumbent upon the condition of repentance on a national and global level. We have a choice, to accept upon ourselves the Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven and thus to naturally evolve into a global higher spiritual state or to continue in our present course of action and face its inevitable consequences.

In actuality, this choice has already been made by us and for us. With regards to this, the scenario of messianic judgment already began over 50 years and we are today committed to the fulfillment of this course of action. This is a Heavenly edict and it will not and cannot be reversed or undone. Our collective human choice has already been made; the messianic scenario is already well under way.

Therefore, Mashiah Ben Yosef material must be understood in light of where we are at today, in light of current socio-political events as they are unfolding in our Holy Land Eretz Yisrael. The numerous philosophical conjectures of the past surrounding the character of Ben Yosef must not be viewed as an absolute mold of political reality into which we must fit our interpretation of current events. We must look first to see where we are at and then apply Ben Yosef teachings to this, only then will we be able to properly interpret the predictions of our holy Sages.

Fulfillment of prophecy is happening now in the way so ordained by Heaven. Mashiah Ben Yosef could have come in any number of forms or manners. Yet, he is here with us today, in his present form, based upon where we are today and how G-d in Heaven has ordained to respond to us and our choices.

In light of this introduction, let us proceed to outline in brief the original teachings about Mashiah Ben Yosef, define the common denominators and then look where we are at today and thus put all the pieces together to, pray G-d, get a glimpse of the fulfillment of prophecy happening around us.

In order to first explore the character of Mashiah Ben Yosef, we must first explore the nature of why he is said to be from the tribe of Yosef (specifically Ephraim). Why could he not be from any other tribe? Obviously by stating that this pre-Mashiah is of the tribe of Yosef, there is the implication of connection and identity with the tribe and its history.

Before we understand Yosef's Mashiah, we must first understand Yosef's tribe and the Kingdom that came forth under its tutelage.

Part 2

There are two very specific Biblical portrayals that properly define for us the character of the Tribe of Yosef and more so show us its relationship with the Tribe of Yehuda, from which comes forth Mashiah Ben David. From these two portrayals we will be able to draw a picture that will help us recognize the character of the "Benei Yosef" of today as well as clearly see the relationship of the two Mashiahs, Ben Yosef and Ben David.

The first Biblical episode of significance that outlines for us the relationship of Yosef and Yehuda also foreshadows the future inevitable meeting of their Mashiahs. In Genesis, Yosef and Yehuda meet for the first time as adults in Pharaoh's court. Yosef is

unrecognizable to Yehuda having been raised an Egyptian for so many years. While Yehuda has maintained his cultural identity, Yosef looks ever so different. More than this, rather than following in the "family business," Yosef, is now a politician, a Prime Minister of Egypt, a man of the world, so very much unlike the House of Jacob, who are few, isolated and different. Yosef's name is Egyptian, as are his appearance, wife and children ever so opposite from his brothers. All in all, there is nothing left "Israelitish" of Yosef except one major defining factor. This is his heart.

In his heart, Yosef is still the son of Jacob and still a member of "the tribe." I use this term because although today we would call Yosef a "Jew" in good standing, he nevertheless never really was a "Jew" by the exact definition of the word. Yosef and his progeny are not "Jews" by the specific definition of the term, simply because the term "Jew" applies specifically to the descendants of Judah ("Jewdah").

In actuality, since the destruction of the Biblical Northern Kingdom of Israel, closely associated with the Tribe of Yosef, all Israelites have come to be termed "Jews" because of association to the Nation of Judah, which continued, was destroyed by Babylon, but yet rebuilt. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was never rebuilt. The exile under the Assyrians technically never came to an end. All recognizable survivors of the Northern Kingdom fled south into Judah.

Judah was later destroyed by Rome and it is Rome and the nations it has sired that continue to this day to look upon all descendants of the House of Israel as being members of the Nation of Judah, and thus Jews, regardless of their authentic tribal origins.

Back in Pharaoh's court, we see that G-d led Yosef down a very different path from the rest of his family which we should rightly call Israel, and later (in history) Yehuda. Yosef, while assimilated externally, remained faithful to Israel internally. Yet, it is Yosef's external and foreign posture / appearance that brings him into what our Sages taught was direct conflict with Yehuda. As is clear from the Genesis encounter, Yosef is testing his brothers to see if they are willing to stand together as brothers and defend Binyamin, whom he (Yosef) had set up and falsely accused of theft. Yehuda takes up the argument for Binyamin and his words are harsh and confrontational. Yosef recognizes the sincerity in Yehuda's words and shortly discards all pretenses and reunites with his brothers.

While this story is know to all, remember that the entire episode of the test and conflict stretched out over more than a year's time. On their first visit to Egypt, Shimon was taken prisoner. No one of his brothers came to his rescue or even spoke up for him. Shimon remained imprisoned for a year, and would have been there longer if the brothers did not need to return to Egypt for food.

Thus a year later needing to return, knowing full well the demand to bring Binyamin to Egypt, the brothers were at a crossroads. Should they not go to Egypt, they would have no grain, surely a recipe for suicide in a society dependent upon agriculture. Should they go, without Binyamin, who knows what the Prime Minister of Egypt would do to them? Yet, if they do go along with Binyamin, who knows what could happen to him?

Baring for 20+ years the guilt and shame of how they treated their brother Yosef, they feared greatly what would happen to dear old Dad Israel, if they messed up again and harm came to Binyamin. Funny, how they shared no such remorse for Shimon. Yet, the brothers had learned their lesson. And Yehuda, son #4, takes charge; not by means of authority or Divine decree but rather because that was his personality. His personality made him rise up like a rocket and become a leader among his brothers. This is most unusual that the number four son should rise up and take a position of power and authority in the presence of his older brothers. Nonetheless, Reuven son number one, and Levi, son number three are not heard from. Apparently, they acquiesce to the leadership role of their younger brother Yehuda.

There is only one problem here; there already is a leader among the brothers, a mighty and powerful leader at that! This leader is Yosef! Although he is not a leader of his brothers by their choice, he is a leader by right and Divine design. Therefore we have two leaders, Yosef and Yehuda, one in the "family business" and one not.

What then is to happen when leaders clash? What happens in the "family business" now has to take into account the new leader, i.e., Yosef. Whether the Sons of Israel like it or not, their cast-away brother Yosef has risen to leadership in his own right and now that he is reunited with the family does not mean that his position and role of leadership is diminished. This is what psychologically underlies the conflict between Yosef and Yehuda as outlined in Genesis. The friction between their two personalities exists and existed even prior to Yosef's identity being revealed. As it was then, so it is today, as we shall soon see.

For our second Biblical portrayal, we must jump centuries into the future from the initial confrontation between Yosef and Yehuda and look towards the relationship of their descendants. As is known from later Biblical / Jewish history G-d chooses David from the House of Yehuda to be King over all Israel. This selection was not welcomed and accepted by all the tribes so quickly. Indeed, David reigned as King of Yehuda for seven years prior to being accepted as King over all the tribes. This is because throughout Jewish history to that time, it was Yosef who was naturally considered to be the leader of Israel.

Yosef became Jacob's first-born by his father's personal decree and received the appropriate double-portion of land inheritance in Eretz Yisrael. While Yehuda was certainly the singularly largest of the twelve tribes, the two Yosef tribes of Ephraim and Menashe were together bigger than he. Indeed, when Moshe Rabbeynu chose his own

personal successor to lead the Jewish people, he did not choose his brother in-law Caleb from the tribe of Yehuda, husband of his sister Miriam and by all means a worthy individual who could by right lead Israel. Rather Moshe Rabbeynu chose his servant, his assistant Yehoshua, a man descended from Yosef. No one questioned this choice, not even Caleb.

Yehoshua was a man of Yosef and as such was fit and proper to rule. Throughout the days of the Judges, until the Kingdom of David, the Yosef tribes were always looked to for leadership in Israel. And when David's grandson took the throne and decreed edicts unacceptable to the people, what did the other tribes do? They rebelled and cast off Davidic (i.e. Yehuda) leadership and formed their own Kingdom under the leadership of no one other than a Ben Yosef!

Throughout the history of ancient Israel, there was always this conflict between Yosef and Yehuda, both the individuals and the tribes that they sired. The relationship between the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Yehuda was never really one of brothers. The relationship between the two kingdoms was tedious at best. Israel in the north claimed to stick to the psychology of the old ways, which of course never really happened. Yehuda on the other hand claimed to be true to G-d, and faithful to His chosen King and Temple, which in all due respect was not so true either. The Bible is replete with the conflicts and sour relationship between the Kingdom of Yehuda and the Kingdom of Israel, with titular leadership from Yosef.

Yosef, the individual, was a man of the world, an able leader of Egypt all the while faithful to the ideals of Israel, his father. His progeny carried on their father's traits of courage, outgoingness and fearlessness of interactions with other nations. The Yosef tribes excelled in their relationships with others. They were a very cosmopolitan group. However the influence from the idolatrous societies around the Northern Kingdom eventually proved too much even for the robust, proud and powerful Benei Yosef. In spite of all the prophetic warnings sent by G-d to them the Northern Kingdom, with tribe of Yosef at their spiritual head succumbed to the evil influences surrounding it and suffered Divine judgment because of its sins. Yehuda was not too far behind. Neither tribe, neither kingdom lived up to their Divine calling.

With the fall of both Kingdoms and centuries of assimilation the actual blood-lines of the tribes have become blurred and in many cases outright lost. To this day, although the blood-line identities of the members of the Yosef and Yehuda tribes have been for the most part blurred, the psychological conflict between them is still as strong and evident as ever. However being that we today have lost sight of the original historical conflict of the tribes we also do not know how to recognize its modern manifestation because we do not know how to recognize the modern day Benei Yehuda and Benei Yosef and identify them by their characters and behaviors as opposed to their names and blood-lines.

Yet, it is this identification that is paramount in importance. For how can we recognize a Mashiah Ben Yosef all the while that we so immaturely think that Ben Yosef can only mean of the blood line of Yosef? We must understand who Yosef is today, metaphorically and spiritually speaking. Only then will we be able to properly recognize and identify his messiah.

Let us then proceed to discuss more about the character of Yosef and the Benei Yosef and see from the description if anyone today can be associated with it.

Part 3

The character of the Benei Yosef, both past and present, can be summed up quite easily by reviewing what exactly the Bible has to say about the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Throughout prophecy the Northern Kingdom is always referred to as Yosef. Therefore whatever is said about the Biblical Northern Kingdom of Israel holds true for the Benei Yosef and helps us identify its characteristics.

By superimposing the Biblical descriptions onto modern personages and groups, we should be able to clearly identify those who embrace the "spirit" of Benei Yosef today. As mentioned previously being that for the most part specific physical blood-lines of the tribes of Yosef have been lost for centuries, the only way we can identify Yosef today is through their characteristics. Recognize the character and you recognize Yosef and can thus focus onto recognition of his Mashiah.

Biblical prophecies are certainly not very complementary towards Yosef. While his strength is praised he is on numerous occasion admonished, often rather harshly, because of wanton ways assimilating into the surrounding non-Jewish cultures and forgetting about his covenant with G-d and Torah. Yosef is often condemned in prophecy because he has fallen aside and follows his pleasures and lusts instead of staying moral and honest. From a summary of prophecy we can see that Yosef is not viewed well by Heaven. Nonetheless, Yosef's future is predicted to be bright because G-d is going to reunite him with Yehuda and make one nation out of the two of them.

Yosef as the representative for the Northern Kingdom is described as rebelling against G-d's chosen House of David monarchy and the Holy Temple, built by Solomon, son of David, but built for all Israel and not just for Yehuda. By rebelling against David, Jerusalem and the Temple, Yosef can best be described as rebelling against the very foundations of what today we define as the religion of Torah Judaism.

Indeed, allegiance to and faith in a Mashiah Ben David, the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the capital of a united Israel is the core of Judaism and the foundation of our daily prayers. By not accepting these Yosef has separated himself

from the very essence of Judaism. Does any of this sound familiar or recognizable today? We will answer this question as we proceed. Yet, in order to properly lay the groundwork for this answer, let us look to the Prophets to assist us to further ascertain the identity of modern day Yosef.

According to one specific reference in the Prophets we are able to generally ascertain where the exiles of both Yosef and Yehuda went once they left the Holy Land so many centuries ago. The prophet Ovadiah (1:20) mentions that the exiled hosts of the Children of Israel went to dwell amongst the previously ejected Canaanites in a land called Tzarfat, which is the Hebrew name for modern day France. Interestingly, the same pasuk states that the exiles of Jerusalem, obviously the tribe of Yehuda who stayed faithful to the holy city were exiled to the land of Sifrad, which in Hebrew is modern day Spain.

Based upon this one pasuk many commentators have discerned that the Jewish inhabitants of France, Germany and Eastern Europe are descendants of Yosef, whereas those of Spanish origins are from Yehuda. In modern and direct terms, the blood-lines of Yosef are the original ancestors of the major portion of what we today call Ashkenazi Jewry, whereas the Yehuda blood-line is the source of the original Sephardic Jews from Spain.

There you have it, Biblical proof that Ashkenazim are from Yosef and Sephardim are from Yehuda. At least, this is how it was many centuries ago. Over many centuries, and especially in recent times, we see both personal and mass migrations, where individuals and whole communities moved from one country to the next. Today, the blood-lines of Ashkenazim and Sephardim, and who exactly is from a Yosef tribe or from Yehuda is very much intermingled. Personally, I view this as a blessing from G-d and a partial fulfillment of the prophecy to reunite the Houses of Yosef and Yehuda.

This being said, and the blood-lines being somewhat identified, let us now turn again to the characteristic traits of Yosef, their secularism, and rebellion against Jerusalem, the Davidic Kingdom and the Holy Temple and view this in light of the growth of radical secularism amongst European Ashkenazi Jews over the past two centuries and only then can we come into the modern realm and discuss secular Zionism. I believe the answer to the above question as to the modern identity of Yosef is becoming ever so much clearer.

Those who have ever studied the cultural, sociological and even psychological differences between Sephardim and Ashkenazim come to some rather striking conclusions. While there is of course much that is similar between the two peoples, there are specific traits in personality and world outlook that sharply divide the two types. Interestingly, but it should come as no surprise that the modern day differences between Sephardim and Ashkenazim ever so clearly parallel the differences between Biblical

Yehuda and Yosef. Indeed, although the blood-lines are clouded, the identities of the souls still shine through bright and clear.

Yosef is portrayed in the Bible as cosmopolitan, world savvy, and what we would today call secular. It is then of no wonder that modern day Ashkenazim descendants of Yosef should follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. Yosef was clever, strong and ever so "bull-headed." Sound familiar? The difference between religious and secular Ashkenazim we will discuss later, but for right now let us focus on the secular and how these modern descendants of Yosef fit into the messianic scenario.

In order to discuss messianic matters, let us begin by delving into the centuries old prophecy, now fulfilled, that G-d would in the end of days restore His people to our Holy Land. How was this to happen needs to be understood. For this let me share with you an ancient teaching from the writings of Rabbi Sa'adiah Gaon.

Over 1,000 years ago, Rabbi Sa'adiah Gaon wrote a most peculiar and most prophetic prediction about the return of the exiles to the Holy Land and the rebuilding of the Israelite nation. In his Emunot VeDeot (Article 8, Chapter 5) he writes:

"We already know that if our repentance is incomplete, we will remain [unredeemed] until the end comes. If it comes and we do not repent, salvation may come with us still sinners. With so much time having passed, G-d will return us to the Land without repentance. Only there is a prophetic tradition that we will be beset by troubles and distress through which we will choose to repent and will merit redemption. They also said that the catalyst for this will be a man from the seed of Yosef."

The beginning of redemption is clearly defined as the initial return of Jews to our Holy Land and our independence therein. This indeed has happened beginning in 1948, which itself is a year of prophetic significance. Over 100 years ago a Syrian Rabbi Yitzhak Alfiyya wrote in the name of Kabbalistic traditions that indeed the redemption would begin in the Hebrew year 5708, corresponding to 1948. The establishment of the State of Israel occurred right on time according to Rabbi Alfiyya and it was established exactly as Sa'adiah Gaon said it would be, with us still sinners.

The secular State of Israel established by ardent secular Ashkenazi Jews from Europe, much to their own chagrin, fulfilled the Biblical, prophetic and Kabbalistic prophecies for the beginning of the redemption.

In light of all what we have covered, the Ashkenazi secular State of Israel must be viewed not as a re-establishment of Southern Kingdom of Yehuda, but rather as the re-establishment of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Never in the history of Zionism was it ever conceived to re-establish the Biblical state of Yehuda. Never did the Zionists

consider naming their new state Yehuda although the founders all considered themselves Jews.

Indeed, the founding Zionist fathers created for themselves a new name and a new identity. No longer were they to be called Jews. Now they are Israelis. This term has not been in use since the days of the fallen Northern Kingdom over 2500 years ago. The resurrection of the term Israeli to also include the members of the tribe of Yehuda (Yehudim-Jews) has not been heard since the days of King Solomon.

Like the Northern Kingdom, the present secular State of Israel rejects the authority of the House of David, enshrined as it is in the Orthodox religious leadership, they reject the concepts of both rebuilding the Temple and reconstituting the Sanhedrin. However, to their credit, they have accepted as fact that Jerusalem, capital of old Yehuda is now the one capital of all Israel.

The secular State of Israel today embraces the same rebellious spirit of the ancient Benei Yosef of the old Northern Kingdom of Israel. As such modern day Israel is the metaphorical Tribe of Yosef, if not the real tribe by rite of Ashkenazi blood-lines. We have now identified modern day Yosef. Now we must move along to investigate the identity of Mashiah Ben Yosef.

In order to do this, let us first remember that the term Mashiah, although it literally means "anointed one" actually means a redeemer and savior. Therefore Mashiah Ben Yosef is to be the savior of the modern day State of Israel. This therefore means that Mashiah Ben Yosef will some how have to be an Israeli politician and some kind of religious leader.

Before we can investigate this further, we must learn more about what our Sages have taught about the nature, psyche and role of Mashiah Ben Yosef. Only then can we begin to identify him clearly and possibly point fingers at individuals who embrace these aspects of Mashiah Ben Yosef identity.

Part 4 - Conclusion

It never ceases to amaze me how the mind of man can run away into the most abstract imagination based upon the most simplest and practical of things. I consider this phenomenon of mind to be one of man's greatest assets whereas at the same time it is one of our greatest dangers. Spiritual existence is as real and tangible as physical existence. However, due to its "other-dimensional" status most just talk about or postulate about spiritual reality without having any personal experience whatsoever with its real details. This is where the imagination can become very dangerous indeed. These points must be kept in mind whenever there is discussion about the political reality versus the spiritual concepts of Mashiah Ben Yosef.

As can be seen throughout all literature on the subject, Mashiah Ben Yosef is to come as an actual political figure, a flesh and blood human being, who lives, fights and dies like any other normal human being. His role in history is to be political and sociological. He is supposed to be military warrior, a general, a man of violence and revenge. Nowhere in classical literature are any specific spiritual attributes ascribed to him. He is never described as an overwhelmingly holy man or righteous man. He is not described as an enlightened Sage or master of esoteric lore.

No, Mashiah Ben Yosef, has always been described in classical literature as just what he is supposed to be, a military general, and leader of later day Israel whose role in history is to wage the wars of HaShem against the evil empire of Edom / Europe and to destroy their power and influence in the world. This is who Mashiah Ben Yosef will be, just as originally described, and all later embellishments to his career, soul, spiritual source and identity may or may not be true. Only time will tell with these. We will discuss more about the evil empire and its leader Armilus in the following lessons.

Throughout Ben Yosef literature it is repeatedly taught that he is supposed to die in battle with the enemies of Israel. General tradition teaches that he is to be killed by Armilus after waging a powerful battle that will destroy most of Europe and the civilization it has sired. The Zohar however teaches an alternative scenario. According to the Zohar, Mashiah Ben Yosef is to be killed by a King of Persia (Iran) who is to invade and conquer Israel. Regardless of who it is that gets to kill Ben Yosef, apparently his fate to face death is agreed upon in all the sources. Although Kabbalists since the days of the Ari'zal have prayed that Mashiah Ben Yosef not have to die, such a change in fate would require drastic changes amongst the Jewish people, the likes of which have not yet happened. Therefore, in light of our current situation, we should however uncomfortably accept that Ben Yosef's destiny is right on target.

Ben Yosef is supposed to die in battle, yet the classic Midrashim relating the matter never actually reveal to us the reason why this has to be so. For the reason to this we must turn to the literature of the Kabbalists. Rather than proceed with an in-depth review of all the pertinent literature, let me summarize the major point.

Rabbi Hayim Vital, master Kabbalist and codifier of the Ari'zal system sums up Ben Yosef's fate by saying that his date with death is due to the fact that his soul emanates from the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil, instead of emanating from the Tree of Life. This metaphor is packed with meaning.

As we know in the Garden of Eden, there were the two trees; eating the fruits of one brought eternal life, eating the fruits of the other brought death. Adam as we know ate of the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil and thus brought death to the world. Mashiah Ben Yosef as the true "son of man" (Adam) follows in his footsteps and like every other

human being since Eden is destined to "go the way of all the earth." Mashiah Ben David on the other hand is said to eat from the Tree of Life and as such will introduce to the world the radical removal of the concept of what we know as death. We will discuss Ben David in his place as we proceed.

Mashiah Ben Yosef is a man, born, and destined to die, like any other man. He is of the Tree of Knowledge and this seals his fate. Yet, the metaphor of the two Trees also goes beyond the mere applications to human versus spiritual life. The two Trees have come to represent the two ways of understanding the Torah, pshat and sod (Kabbalah).

Kabbalah (sod) has always been called the Tree of Life, whereas pshat (the study of non-mystical Torah) has always been called the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil. By saying that Ben Yosef emanates from the Tree of Knowledge, Rabbi Hayim is clearly insinuating something rather revelatory. Mashiah Ben Yosef is destined not to be a Kabbalist or student of the Kabbalah. As emanating from the Tree of Knowledge, Ben Yosef's outlook on life deals exclusively with life in this world, without too much concern for the life in the spiritual world.

Ben Yosef, might very well be a dreamer as was Father Yosef himself, but also like Father Yosef, Mashiah Ben Yosef will be a savvy, modern and to the eye very secular politician. In his heart and private practice he will be righteous, whether that righteousness as prescribed by Torah Law will be a known thing to the public remains to be seen. If Mashiah Ben Yosef is to be anything like Father Yosef, then indeed he will most likely follow in his footsteps and appear one way in public, and yet, be an entirely different person in private.

Another interesting point about Ben Yosef mentioned in classical sources is that similar to Father Yosef his brothers, specifically those led by Yehuda, are said not to recognize him. We know the significance this played in the Biblical story, but we really do have to consider the ramifications of what this would mean if modern day Jews do not recognize Mashiah Ben Yosef.

In light of the fact as we have discussed that Yehuda may be a metaphor for religious Jews and Yosef a metaphor for secular Jews, we can foresee Mashiah Ben Yosef being a Jewish leader who is not much recognized and accepted by the religious community at large. As such Mashiah Ben Yosef would lead a secular Israel, similar as did any Biblical leader of Yosef rule over the ancient Northern Kingdom of Israel.

The wars of Mashiah ben Yosef are called the wars of HaShem. However, as with all wars of HaShem, this does not exactly mean that the wars are fought in the Name of HaShem. Remember Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed Jerusalem and exiled Yehuda acted as HaShem's agent. As the Divine agent he ruthlessly murdered tens of thousands of Jews, burned down the Holy Temple and perpetuated many other horrible

crimes. Nonetheless, the scriptures are clear that he acted as the unwitting and unknowing agent of HaShem to punish Yehuda. Nebuchadnezzar acted for HaShem but not in the Name of HaShem. It is possible that Mashiah ben Yosef will be in a similar position.

Throughout scripture and classical Torah literature it is Yosef who is portrayed as the antagonist of Esau. Esau's descendants, Edom, have always been identified with the Romans, and the nations that succeeded them, modern day Europe, with the Church of Rome at their head. Thus the classical conflict of Mashiah Ben Yosef is said to be with Rome, which is Europe, quite possibly the modern day European Union. In light of recent European Union positions towards the sworn enemies of Jews worldwide and their constant anti-Israeli stand on a number of issues, political and otherwise, it is no wonder that a recent Israeli government report recently stated that there is a growing possibility of outright conflict and other hostilities foreseen over the coming decade between Israel and Europe.

World pressure against the existence of the State of Israel is growing. The United Nation has proven itself on countless occasions to not be a friend of the State of Israel. The European Union is fanning the flames of anti-Israeli positions worldwide. It is the member states of the European Union, specifically France and Germany that supports the enemies of the Jewish State and regularly supplies them with weapons.

The State of Israel is being pushed further and further into a political and military corner. The present political environment of pressure being put on Israel to leave itself vulnerable to its enemies leaves very little maneuvering room. One does not have to be a prophet to predict that eventually Israel will have to fight a great war just for the right to survive and exist. When the time comes to fight this war, Edom, with the European Union at its head is prophesied to spear-head the attack. Whether this will be directly with United Nations or European Union troops in a Bosnia type scenario or with political / economic sanctions and sabotage, time will tell.

Classical literature tells us that whatever the practical details of the scenario may be, the conflict between Mashiah Ben Yosef, a most likely secular Ashkenazi Jew, and the forces of Edom, who most likely are Europe and the United Nations is inevitable. Whether Mashiah Ben Yosef will die in this conflict as predicted is also subject to discussion, yet as with all details of this scenario, time will tell.

As pressure grows against the State of Israel and injustices against the State and her people continue, resentment grows amongst the populace. Somehow, at some time, something will happen in the body politic of the State of Israel that will cause an eruption of Jewish patriotism and lead to the rise of one who is destined to become Mashiah Ben Yosef, the savior of the modern State of Israel. He will lead Israel into bitter armed conflict against its

enemies, who I remind you are not predicted to be led by Arabs. He is to be victorious, at least for a while, until Armilus comes.

The present world situation is ripe for the rise of Mashiah Ben Yosef. As we have described him, so shall he come. The religious will not welcome or accept him, whereas many of the secular will look to him as if he, Mashiah Ben Yosef, is in reality Mashiah Ben David. For this reason alone, he may be destined to die. Then again, like any other Jew, he may humble himself before his Creator in Heaven, embrace the Holy Torah and thus embrace the Tree of Life. In such a case, what will be is anyone's guess, and HaShem's Grace will decide the matter.

Much has been written regarding Mashiah Ben Yosef. There is an entire body of philosophy, speculations, calculations, and of course Kabbalah. Whether these add to our understanding of Mashiah Ben Yosef or merely cloud his identity time will tell once he comes. He has not yet come. We cannot point to anyone as yet being Mashiah Ben Yosef, although many have walked in his path. There are many who we can point to in Israel today who are likely candidates to become Mashiah Ben Yosef. Yet, as with all things, the final decision on what is to be is in the Hands of Almighty HaShem.

We have done now all that we need to in order to identify Mashiah Ben Yosef, the coming leader of the State of Israel who will defend our Holy Land from the encroachments of the nations of the world with Europe at their head. Europe, on the other hand will be led by a renewed Caesar, a new Alexander. In Jewish tradition this coming head of Edom / Europe will be called Armilus, based on the name Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome. In one Jewish source, Armilus is identified by his non-Jewish / Christian name. The Midrash Milkhamot HaMashiah calls Armilus, the "Anti-Christ." Being that this evil Mashiah of Edom is to play such a great role in the messianic scenario coming ever so quickly upon us, it is proper for us to continue our discussions and to focus on him.

END