

Actual Moshiach Vs Fit To Be Moshiach

Appendix – Kuntres Shmoi Shel Moshiach

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As was mentioned in the introduction the word “Moshiach”, literally the Anointed one, has different meanings dependent on the context it is used in within Talmudic texts.

The word “Moshiach” can be used to mean the Actual Moshiach, the Rambam’s Moshiach b’Vadei. Also known as the Goel HaAcharon – the Final Redeemer, or Goel Tzedek the Righteous Redeemer or Ultimate Redeemer.

The same word “Moshiach” can also be used to mean just, ראוי להיות משיח - “Fit to be Moshiach”. As explained in earlier chapters when someone is considered fit to be Moshiach, such as Rebbi’s Shayla, Yannai and Chanina. The belief is they will become the Actual Moshiach, when Hashem decides it time to bring the Geulah.

We find mention and the distinction between the actual Moshiach and Raui Lehyos Moshiach (Fit to be Moshiach) in the Gemara itself.

Rashi Sanhedrin 98b Dibur hamaschil: אין משיח לישראל
אין משיח לישראל - שחזקיה היה משיח ועליו נאמרו כל הנבואות אצמיח קרן לבית ישראל ועמד ורעה בעוז ה

Rashi explains the word "Moshiach" to mean the actual Goel Tzedek. "As on him were said all the Messianic Prophecies".

We see the word “Moshiach” here means the Actual Moshiach. As the Actual Moshiach is known **after** he fulfills the Messianic Prophecies. According to Rambam Halachically, he must minimally build the Bais Hamikdosh and gather in all the exiles, in order for us to know at the Halachic level, he is the Actual Moshiach – Moshiach B’Vadei.

Later on the same Daf 98b. Rashi dibur hamaschil:

אי מן חייא הוא כגון רבינו הקדוש - אם משיח מאותן שחיים עכשיו ודאי היינו רבינו הקדוש דסובל תחלואים
וחסיד גמור הוה כדאמרין בבבא מציעא (דף פה.) ואם היה מאותן שמתו כבר היה דניאל איש חמודות שנדון
ביסורין בגוב אריות וחסיד גמור היה והאי כגון לאו דווקא

Rashi says if "Moshiach" is from the living he is like Rebbi, as Rebbi suffered and was pious, and states similar about Doniel ע"ש. I.e. "Moshiach" here is not meant to mean Actual Moshiach / Goel Tzedek. Rather "Moshiach" here means ראוי להיות משיח, Fit to be Moshiach.

As Rashi and others explain, Rav didn't think Rebbi or Doniel were the actual Moshiach that already fulfilled all the prophecies, similar to the above regarding Chezkiya. Rather as can be clearly understood from the context. Rav is understood to be saying that Rebbi and Doniel are Fit to be Moshiach. Such that if the Geulah would come at that point in time. Rebbi or Doniel will become the Actual Moshiach upon fulfilling of all the Messianic Prophecies.

Thus we can see the distinction in Chazal, between Raui Lehyos Moshiach versus the Goel Tzedek. However both are called "Moshiach", and we can see the word Moshiach has its definition and meaning based on the context it is used in, as demonstrated above by Rashi's commentary. And as understood from many other primary sources and commentaries.

As this relates to the Yeshivos of Rebbe's Shayla, Yannai and Chanina, as explained in previous chapters. It appears the students called their Roshei Yeshiva "Moshiach" while they were alive and continued to call them "Moshiach" after they passed away. As from the beginning they were not saying their Rav has actually fulfilled the Messianic Prophecies. Rather their belief was, their Rav is fit to be Moshiach, and when its time for Geulah it will be their Rav that becomes the Final Redeemer and fulfills all the Messianic Prophecies. As such they called him Moshiach, with the context being fit to be Moshiach.

As quoted earlier in the name of several Acharonim. In each generation there is someone that is fit to be Moshiach. The Sedei Chemed states that in each generation it was always "estimated" who that tzadik is.

Post Chazal we also find instances of students calling their Rav Moshiach while alive and continuing to call them Moshiach, after they have passed away. Such as by the Baal Shemtov, the holy Ruhzenher, the Saba Kadisha - HaRav Shlomo Elazar Alfandari, and other renowned and holy tzadikim.

As above, the context of calling them Moshiach is meant that they are ראוי להיות משיח and that when its time for the Geulah it will be their Rav that will become the Ultimate Redeemer by building the Bais Hamikdosh and performing the in-gathering of all the exiles, and fulfilling all the Messianic Prophecies.

Belief and declaration as to whom one believes is Moshiach has a strong foundation in Chazal and Mesoras Yisroel throughout the ages. Such belief and declaration is in the same category and realm as declaration of whom one believes is the Gadol HaDor, Sar HaTorah, Posek HaDor, Tzadik HaDor etc, or as to whom will be the Kohen HaGadol or who will be on the Sanhedrin HaGadol. Other than being a great Torah scholar, fit to be Moshiach and Sar HaTorah etc have no halachic status.

Rambam l'halacha is only speaking about how to recognize the Goel Tzedek by way of Chezkas Moshiach and Vadei Moshiach. Rambam doesn't give Halachic status to Raui Lehyos Moshiach of which Chazal say without dissenting opinion can be from the living or maisim, as shown in earlier chapters.