

Chapter 4:

Can a Dead Man be Moshiach?

Three Beliefs

We've already seen that Moshiach will come at a pre-determined date if we do not merit his coming sooner. The question we will now address is whether, prior to his coming at this date, he must be alive. The concept of a resurrection of the dead is certainly a very Jewish concept. It can be found in Tanach (Daniel 12:2) and, in its future sense, is listed by the Rambam as one of the thirteen principles of Judaism. Can the Lubavitcher Rebbe, even though he is currently dead, come back to life and serve as the Moshiach?

To avoid confusion, we will divide this into three separate beliefs that need to be analyzed.

1. The first is that **maybe** the Lubavitcher Rebbe will be resurrected and serve as Moshiach. Maybe someone else, whether living or dead, will be Moshiach. This belief leaves

open the **possibility** of his being Moshiach without denying that position to other candidates.

2. The second belief we will consider is that the Lubavitcher Rebbe will definitely be Moshiach. Or rather, he is the only possible candidate for Moshiach and only when he is resurrected can Moshiach come. There are no other candidates.

3. The third belief is that the Lubavitcher Rebbe is already Moshiach. This is easily confused with the previous belief because people are not rigorous in their terminology. According to the second belief, the Rebbe **will be** Moshiach. He has not yet started his mission to bring Yemos HaMoshiach and is therefore only a candidate for Moshiach. Granted, he is the only candidate, which is why people already call him Moshiach.

According to the third belief, he has already begun his mission. He has gathered in the exiles, brought Jews back to observance, and brought increased world peace. He is Moshiach and will reveal himself as such when he is resurrected. [Note that I use the term resurrected because of its Jewish source in t'chiyas hameisim. This is not intended to be a subtle reference to the beliefs of any other religion.]

Dead Moshiach

Let us begin by addressing the last belief, that the Rebbe began his mission, died, and will return from the deceased to

complete his job as Moshiach. This assumes two things. First, that the Rebbe actually began his mission. The second, that he can return from the dead and successfully complete the mission as Moshiach.

Our starting point will be the Rambam's Mishneh Torah because the Rebbe said many times that the Rambam's account of Moshiach in this work is halachically binding. The following is what the Rambam writes regarding Moshiach in his Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 11:4:

If a king will arise from the House of David who delves deeply into the study of the Torah and, like David his ancestor, observes its mitzvos as prescribed by the Written Law and the Oral Law; if he will compel all of Israel to walk in [the way of the Torah] and repair the breaches [in its observance]; and if he will fight the wars of G-d – he is presumed to be Moshiach. If he succeeds in the above, builds the Beis Hamikdash on its site, and gathers in the dispersed remnant of Israel, he is definitely the Moshiach. He will then perfect the entire world, [motivating all the nations] to serve G-d together, as it is written (Zephaniah 3:9), "I will make the peoples pure of speech so that they will all call upon the Name of G-d and serve Him with one purpose".

ואם יעמוד מלך מבית דוד
הוגה בתורה ועוסק במצוות
כדוד אביו, כפי תורה בכתב
ושבעל פה, ויכוף כל ישראל
לילך בה ולחזק בדקה,
וילחם מלחמות ה', הרי זה
בחזקת שהוא משיח, אם
עשה והצליח ובנה מקדש
במקומו וקבץ נדחי ישראל
הרי זה משיח בודאי, ויתקן
את העולם כולו לעבוד את
ה' ביחד שנאמר כי אז
אהפוך אל עמים שפה
ברורה לקרוא כולם בשם
ה' ולעבדו שכם אחד.

We find that Moshiach must study Torah and be punctilious in his observance of mitzvos. The Rebbe certainly fit that description. Moshiach must also do the following:

1. Compel all of Israel to walk in the way of Torah
2. Repair the breaches in observance
3. Fight the wars of G-d

If he does this, then he is *bechezkas Moshiach* – the presumed Moshiach. We can assume, based on our knowledge at that time, that he is Moshiach. However, we cannot be certain. If someone who is *bechezkas Moshiach* then does the following, we know for sure that he is Moshiach:

4. Build the Beis Hamikdash in its place
5. Gather in the dispersed exiles of Israel

After someone who is *bechezkas Moshiach* accomplishes these two goals we can know for sure that he is *vadai Moshiach*. But what if someone whom we believe is Moshiach does not accomplish these things? Rambam continues in 11:5:

But if he did not succeed in all this or was killed, he is definitely not the Moshiach promised in the Torah... and G-d only appointed him in order to test the masses.

ואם לא הצליח עד כה או נהרג,
בידוע שאינו זה שהבטיחה עליו
תורה... ולא העמידו הקדוש
ברוך הוא אלא לנסות בו רבים.

While believers in beliefs 1 and 2 do not, adherents of belief 3 claim that the Rebbe accomplished requirements 1 through 3 above. He initiated an unparalleled tshuvah movement that brought many, many Jews back to observance. He fought the spiritual battles of G-d against assimilation and secularism by sending out mitzvah tanks and armies of youths. Thus, these people conclude, he is at least bechezkas Moshiach. Some will even claim that he accomplished 4 and 5. He built a monumental holy place – 770 – in *his* place and helped bring about the mass immigration of Russian Jews to Israel. Thus, these people argue, the Rebbe is not only bechezkas Moshiach, he is vadai Moshiach.

Yet, there are problems with this theory. First of all, none of these tasks are done. The Rebbe did not fully succeed in any of these. There is still monumental ignorance and lack of observance among Jews throughout the world and Israel is still under siege by terrorists and Arab armies. The Temple Mount remains under Arab control and the majority of Jews still reside outside of Israel. The Rebbe's accomplishments were glorious and awe-inspiring. However, they were not sufficient to fit the Rambam's criteria for Moshiach. In fact, the Rebbe has not fulfilled any of the criteria for being Moshiach except being a Torah scholar and religious man. Let us look at the criteria again:

1. Compel all of Israel to walk in the way of Torah
2. Repair the breaches in observance
3. Fight the wars of G-d

4. Build the Beis Hamikdash in its place
5. Gather in the dispersed exiles of Israel

If only partial success is necessary of each of these requirements then it is not hard at all to find many rabbis who are bechezkas Moshiach. There are many learned rabbis who have fought hard political battles in G-d's name and who have seen success in outreach. For example, R' Noah Weinberg had to fight for many years to win recognition and funding for his now-successful Aish HaTorah program that has brought thousands of Jews back to Torah observance. Is he bechezkas Moshiach?

Furthermore, it is a basic rule of learning that the Rambam was very precise with his language. As many will argue regarding the difference between "to die" and "to be killed", we must read each of the Rambam's words with great care. The Rambam writes that in order to be bechezkas Moshiach one must be a king from the house of David. Only by a wild stretch of the imagination – and a careless reading of the Rambam – can the Rebbe be considered to have been a king. Contrast this with Bar Kochba for whom there is archaeological evidence that he ruled as a king and was punctilious in his observance of mitzvos. The Rambam also says that one who is bechezkas Moshiach will fight the wars of G-d. In which battle did the Rebbe fight in the army? In fact, the Rebbe wrote in Likkutei Sichos vol. 16 pp. 304-305 n. 49 that the Rambam's language here of "fight the wars of G-d" means literal wars including the destruction of Amalek.

It is not merely a figure of speech. But the Rebbe did not fight a war and did not destroy Amalek.

The Rambam's definition of a failed Moshiach is quoted above from halachah 5. Note that the Rambam says “did not succeed... or was killed” so someone's not succeeding in completing the messianic task is sufficient to disqualify him from being Moshiach. But how can the Rambam list not accomplishing these five items as rendering someone definitely not Moshiach? Maybe he will be resurrected and finish these tasks? Or maybe he will complete them in his trips to this world from under the Seat of Glory? No one can ever fall into this category if the Moshiach can come back from the dead and finish his messianic tasks. We must say that, according to the Rambam, Moshiach cannot come back from the dead to complete the criteria. Otherwise, half of this halachah is impossible. We would never be able to declare someone who is bechezkas Moshiach as being definitely not the promised Moshiach for not succeeding. If we allow for the possibility that someone can come back to this world and finish these tasks, then we have nullified the Rambam's words in this halacha. Rather, when someone who is bechezkas Moshiach dies we unfortunately discover for certain that he is not Moshiach.

The Rebbe did not succeed in the five criteria listed directly above. He certainly accomplished an enormous amount in his life. However, he did not accomplish enough to be considered Moshiach. If the Rebbe had begun the five tasks listed by the Rambam, even if he had accomplished enough

to be considered bechezkas Moshiach, the fact that he has died without successfully completing these tasks proves that he is not Moshiach. Of course, if he had not even begun these tasks then we have nothing to discuss. There is no reason to declare him Moshiach other than pure speculation. But if the Rebbe had begun the mission of Moshiach – gathering in the exile, fighting the wars of G-d,... – and failed to successfully complete them then he cannot be Moshiach.

Rabbi Akiva discovered the same almost 2000 years ago when the Moshiach he supported, who actually fought real battles and even ruled as a king in Israel, was killed before fulfilling all five criteria. As the Rambam writes in Hilchos Melachim 11:3:

Once [Bar Koziba] was killed it was known that he was not Moshiach. [בר כוזבא] כיון שנהרג
נודע שאינו משיח.

But Rabbi Akiva was a humble and intellectually honest man. When the Moshiach he wholeheartedly supported was disproven he had the strength of character to admit his mistake. If only there were more Rabbi Akivas in the world.

While until now we have only quoted from the Rambam, it is important to note that the Rambam did not create any of his ideas. They are all based on earlier sources. The Midrashim give extensive accounts of Moshiach's arrival. While they may differ in details, they all agree that there is no room for a Moshiach ben David who begins his mission, dies, and

then comes back to life to finish his mission. Here is one example:

Afterwards, the evil government will rule over Israel for nine months... Moshiach ben Yosef will arise and then bring them to Jerusalem where they will build the Temple, offer sacrifices, and fire will come down from heaven and devour the sacrifices... If they do not merit it, Moshiach ben Efraim [i.e. Yosef] will come but, if they merit it, Moshiach ben David will come. An evil king named Armelius will arise... He will go to Jerusalem and battle Moshiach ben Yosef in the east gate... The Jews will flee to the desert to feed on salt land and roots of weed for 45 days. They are then tested and purified as it says (Zechariah 13:9), "I will bring a third in fire..." Moshiach ben Efraim will die there and Israel will mourn him. After this, G-d will reveal to them Moshiach ben David and the Jews will want to stone him. They will say that he is lying because Moshiach was already killed and another Moshiach will not arise. They will insult him... and he will

ואח"כ יעמוד מלך עז פנים שלשה חדשים, ואח"כ תמלוך מלכות הרשעה על ישראל תשעה חדשים... ויצמח להם משיח בן יוסף ויעלה אותם לירושלם ויבנה בית המקדש ויקריב קרבנות ותרד אש מן השמים ותאכל קרבנותיהם... אם לא זכו משיח בן אפרים בא ואם זכו משיח בן דוד ויעמוד מלך רשע ושמו ארמילוס... וישראל גולין למדברי אגמים לרעות במלוחים ובשרשי רתמים מ"ה ימים, ואז נבחנים ונצרפים שנאמר והבאתי את השלישית באש וגו'. וימות שם משיח בן אפרים וישראל סופדים אותו, ואח"כ יגלה להם להם הקב"ה משיח בן דוד, וישראל ירצו לסקלו ואומרים לו שקר דברת שכבר נהרג משיח ואין משיח אחר עתיד לעמוד ויבזוהו... והוא חוזר לו ונכסה מהם... ובצר להם לישראל הם חוזרים וצועקים מרעב ומצמא ומיד נגלה להם בכבודו...

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return and be concealed from them... After this, the Jews will return and cry out from hunger and thirst and G-d will immediately reveal Himself to them in His glory... The king Moshiach will arise there... and will blow at Armelius thereby killing him... G-d will whistle, gather all the Jews, and bring them to Jerusalem...

ומלך המשיח יצמח שם... ויפיה
באותו ארמילוס הרשע
וימיתהו... והקב"ה שורק ומקבץ
כל ישראל ומעלם ירושלם...

(Otzar HaMidrashim p. 551)

As we said in chapter 1, if we merit it Moshiach ben David will come immediately without this whole process. If we do not merit it, Moshiach ben Yosef will come and fight against Armelius. He will be killed and the Jews will be forced into the desert to starve. Of them, one third will die. Only after Moshiach ben Yosef dies and is publicly mourned by all of Israel will Moshiach ben David come. Even then, the Jews will reject him and he will be concealed. After that, Moshiach will arise, fight the battles of G-d, and the Jewish people will be gathered into the land of Israel.

Notice how Moshiach ben David will begin his mission only after he is concealed. Notice also that regarding Moshiach ben Yosef it says "die" but not regarding Moshiach ben David. If the Lubavitcher Rebbe **already** began his mission and then was concealed, he has changed the entire order presented in this midrash. According to the midrash, first

Moshiach will be concealed and then he will begin his mission. Those who follow the third belief reverse this order.

Furthermore, there is no indication that Moshiach ben David will die. Why would the midrash be shy about this when it says that Moshiach ben Yosef will die? The contrast between concealment and death makes it clear that they are different. Moshiach ben David will be concealed, not die. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the Rebbe is not merely concealed; he is deceased.

Most importantly, who was Moshiach ben Yosef? If the Rebbe is Moshiach ben David, who was Moshiach ben Yosef? Did we merit the coming of the Moshiach so that the entire process of Moshiach ben Yosef was skipped? If so, why was Moshiach ben David concealed? The midrash is apparently being conveniently split in half. However, the concealment is part of the messianic process when the Jewish people *do not merit it* and must therefore follow Moshiach ben Yosef's death. If there is no Moshiach ben Yosef, that means the Jewish people merited a speedy process and there will not be any concealment either.

The only conclusion we can draw is that Moshiach ben David will not die in the middle of his mission. If the Lubavitcher Rebbe began his mission and then died, this means that unfortunately he was not the Moshiach promised in the Torah. Rather, as the Rambam says, G-d appointed him to test the masses. Let us rise up to this test and wait for the real Moshiach to come, even if he tarries.

Definite Future Moshiach

The second belief we mentioned above is that the Rebbe will be Moshiach. No one else can possibly be Moshiach. We will not dwell on this because it is similar to the first belief which we will discuss shortly. Therefore, we will only bring a brief passage from Rambam's Iggeres Teiman – Epistle to Yemen – that indicates that he would not agree with this possibility.

Regarding how and where Moshiach will arise, he will arise specifically in the land of Israel and there will begin his revelation... Regarding how he will arise, he will not be known at all before his arising while he is not the Moshiach, so that it would be said about him such-and-such from such-and-such family. Rather, a man will arise who will be unknown before he is revealed.

ולענין היאך יעמוד משיח
והיכן יעמוד הרי הוא יעמוד
בארץ ישראל דוקא ובה
תחל התגלותו... ולענין
היאך יעמוד, הוא לא יודע
כלל לפני עמדו והוא אינו
משיח עד שיאמר פלוני
בן פלוני מבית אב פלוני,
אלא יעמוד אדם שאינו
ידוע לפני התגלותו...

(Iggeres Teiman, ed. Kafah p. 52)

Moshiach will be unknown before he is revealed. He will not be known by name, only as such-and-such (Ploni ben Ploni). The Rebbe, of course, is known throughout the world. His biography is included in encyclopedias and his obituary was carried in all the major newspapers. He cannot be Moshiach because Moshiach will be unknown before he is revealed.

If one would suggest that the Rebbe was already revealed as Moshiach before he became famous, in line with the third belief we already discussed, the Rambam specifically says that this revelation must take place in the land of Israel. The Rebbe was never in Israel.

It is important to note that the Rambam wrote the above specifically in order to disprove someone who claimed to be Moshiach. The Rambam obviously meant his words literally. What would the Rambam say today about the Rebbe being Moshiach? I think this has already become very clear.

Possible Future Moshiach

The first belief is that the Rebbe **might** be Moshiach. That this great, dead man is a possible candidate among other possible candidates. This seems to be contradicted by the following midrash about Yaakov Avinu during his final words to his sons. Remember that Yaakov is prophesying to his sons about the future of their descendants. To Dan, he prophetically refers to Shimshon. While based on the biblical narrative of Shimshon one would be surprised at the reverence given to him, the midrashim treat him as a religious figure. An excellent treatment of this subject is R' Gerson Weiss' book Samson's Struggle.

Yaakov saw him [Shimshon] and
thought he would be Moshiach.
When he saw that he died, he said
"He, too, died? I wait for Your

לפי שהיה יעקב אבינו
רואה אותו וסבור בו שהוא
מלך משיח, כיון שראה אותו

redemption, Lord (B'reishis 49:18)" שמת אמר אף זה מת,
לישועתך קויתי ה'.
(B'reishis Rabbah 98:14)

When Yaakov prophetically saw that Shimshon died before fulfilling the role of Moshiach he concluded that Shimshon would not be Moshiach. Instead, Yaakov cried out in frustration that he waits for G-d's redemption. Looking at Shimshon's life, it is clear that he did not even begin the mission of a Moshiach. Yet, once he died he could no longer be Moshiach.

We will now turn to the discussions of the rishonim about Moshiach. However, we need to note up front that, due to circumstances beyond our control, the rishonim generally speak about Moshiach in the context of and in response to Christianity. When we quote their statements, we are not chas veshalom implying any equality between the Rebbe and Jesus. We are trying to listen to the rishonim speak in their context and understand what they had to say. We are then applying their statements to our context, which is totally different from theirs. It need not be said that there are very, very significant differences between the Rebbe and Jesus. They are as far apart as night is from day. However, we would be negligent if we ignored the words of the rishonim simply because they said them in the context of Christianity. [We use of the name Jesus rather than a “nickname” for the sake of clarity. See Darchei Tshuvah 147:7 who permits it.]

In response to Christianity's claim that Jesus is Moshiach, there are a number of different responses a Jew can offer. The simplest is that, at least according to the traditional Christian interpretation, Jesus advised his followers not to follow the Torah's mitzvos. Anyone who does that cannot possibly be the Moshiach promised in the Torah. However, the rishonim offered other answers as well. Here is what the Ramban said in his famous disputation:

I cannot believe in his messiahship because the prophet says (Tehillim 72:8) "He will have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" and he [Jesus] did not have dominion... The prophet also says (Yirmiyahu 31:33) "No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me..." And it says (Yishayahu 11:9) "The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." It says (Yishayahu 2:4) "they shall beat their swords [into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;] nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." But from the time of Jesus until now the world is full of murder and theft...

אי אפשי להאמין
במשיחותו שהנביא אומר
"ומשלו מים עד אפסי
ארץ" והוא לא היה לו
ממשלה... וכן הנביא אומר
שבזמן המשיח ולא ילמדו
עוד איש את רעהו ואיש את
אחיו לאמר דעו את ה' כי
כולם ידעו אותי וכו' ואומר
כי מלאה הארץ דעה את
ה' כמים לים מכסים ואומר
וכתתו חרבותם וכו' ולא
ישא גוי אל גוי חרב ולא
ילמדו עוד מלחמה ומימי
ישו ועד הנה כל העולם מלא
חמס ושוד...

(Kisvei HaRamban vol. 1 p. 311)

The Ramban said that the prophecies about Yemos HaMoshiach had not come true since Jesus' life. In other words, if Jesus was Moshiach, why has Yemos HaMoshiach not arrived? This is a very cogent argument. Jesus cannot be Moshiach if he did not bring Yemos HaMoshiach. But the Christians can and do argue that even though he did not even begin bringing about Yemos HaMoshiach in his lifetime he can bring in Yemos HaMoshiach in the future after he is resurrected. What good is the Ramban's argument if a dead Moshiach can come back to life and fulfill the messianic prophecies? Clearly, the Ramban is assuming that once a potential Moshiach dies without fulfilling the messianic prophecies he can no longer be Moshiach. Otherwise, what was this particular argument against Jesus?

Granted, there are other excellent arguments. For example, one could contend that Jesus was not worthy of being Moshiach. However true that may be, that is not what the Ramban is saying in this particular argument. Here he is saying that since Jesus died without bringing in Yemos HaMoshiach he cannot be Moshiach.

Taking this idea of the Ramban, without chas veshalom comparing the Rebbe to the subject of the Ramban's argument, we see that according to the Ramban the Rebbe cannot come back to life as Moshiach. Once the Rebbe died, he lost the possibility of being Moshiach.

But it is not just the Ramban who made this argument. There is an entire disputation literature from some of the greatest

sages of the medieval period. They all used this argument, among others. Try reading through the many disputations in Otzar HaVikuchim. All of these rishonim make the argument that once a candidate for Moshiach dies without bringing in the Yemos HaMoshiach he cannot be Moshiach.

The following is what R' Pinchas HaLevy Horowitz wrote in his philosophical work Sefer HaBris (p. 521).

We are obligated to believe that if a Jewish man comes and begins to save the Jews and he completes the salvation of Israel in that generation, if he finishes the job then he is [Moshiach]. However, whoever does not finish the job but dies or is broken or is captured then he is not [Moshiach] and G-d did not send him.

אנו חייבים להאמין שבא
יבא איש יהודי והוא יחל
להושיע את ישראל והוא
יגמור ישועת יעקב באותו
הדור, ומי שיגמור הדבר
הוא הוא ומי שלא יגמור
באותו הדור ומת או נשבר
או נשבה אינו הוא ולא
אלקים שלחו.

A man who begins his career of saving the Jewish people, whether it be by establishing an unprecedented network of outreach or influencing the return of Soviet Jewry to the land of Israel, and then dies is not the Moshiach that G-d will send.

Consider what the Shevet Yehuda wrote. Shevet Yehuda is a famous history book that is full of philosophical and moral digressions. It is explicitly permitted by the Mishnah Berurah (307:48) for reading on Shabbos because of its religious

value. This is what he wrote regarding Moshiach, in the name of rishonim:

Our belief and the belief of every Jew is that if a man comes, gathers the dispersed of Israel, builds the Temple, and all the nations gather to him and call out unanimously in the name of G-d, **then** we will say that he is Moshiach. Any statement that contradicts this has an explanation.

אבל אמונתנו ואמונת כל יהודי שאם יבא אדם ויקבץ נדחי ישראל ויבנה מקדש וכל העמים יאספו אליו ויקראו כולם בשם קל אז נאמר כי הוא משיחנו. וכל מאמר שיאמר היפך זה יש לו פירוש.

(Shevet Yehuda p. 105)

Only after he gathers in the exile, builds the Temple, and inaugurates Yemos HaMoshiach can we know that someone is Moshiach. Before then, we cannot know.

The bottom line is that a dead man cannot be Moshiach. He cannot become Moshiach and even if he was presumed to be Moshiach before his death we know for certain that he is not Moshiach. That is what the Midrashim say and that is how the Rishonim understood them. There were many who truly believed that the Rebbe was Moshiach. Like Rabbi Akiva, they were unfortunately proven mistaken. They should learn from his example and humbly accept the reality that has been forced upon them.

Surprisingly, the Rebbe himself said this about David HaMelech being Moshiach.

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Evidently, we must say that David HaMelech cannot himself be the Melech HaMoshiach who will be "a leader for them forever" because the initial work of the Melech HaMoshiach will be **before** the redemption, as explained in the Rambam (Hilchos Melachim 11:4) and certainly before the resurrection (including the righteous who arise immediately, as Chazal say (Yoma 5b) "Moshe and Aharon with us").

ולכאורה עכצ"ל שאין דוד המלך בעצמו מלך המשיח שיהי' "נשיא להם לעולם", שהרי תחילת פעולת מלך המשיח תהיה קודם הגאולה, כמבואר ברמב"ם (הל' מלכים פי"א ה"ד), ובודאי קודם תחיית המתים (גם דצדיקים הקמים מיד, כחז"ל (יומא ה,ב) משה ואהרן עמנו).

(Likutei Sichos vol. 35 p. 206 n. 6)

According to the Rebbe, David HaMelech cannot be Moshiach because Moshiach cannot come from the dead. This is true even though there will be a resurrection of the righteous – Moshe and Aharon in particular. Despite this, King David cannot be Moshiach because he is dead. This is notwithstanding the fact that King David was certainly righteous and therefore has the ability to visit this world in a physical form and, according to the Sefer Chasidim, say kiddush for others. Nevertheless, the Rebbe said that he cannot be Moshiach. Now, after the Rebbe's unfortunate passing, we must follow the Rebbe and say the same about him. He cannot be Moshiach.

Closing Remarks

We have seen based on the Rambam that a man who begins his work as Moshiach and then dies cannot be Moshiach. One who never begins his work as Moshiach and then dies cannot become Moshiach based on what the Rebbe wrote, as well as the Ramban and many others. The only conclusion we can draw from this analysis is that, sadly, the Rebbe has died and can no longer be Moshiach. It is now our duty, indeed part of the twelfth fundamental principle of Judaism, to wait for the true Moshiach to be revealed. Whether that Moshiach will have the soul of the Rebbe, along with the soul of David and Moshe, is irrelevant because he will not look or sound like the Rebbe. He will be someone else. Now that the Rebbe has passed on there is another man alive who is the potential Moshiach of our generation. It is up to us to repent and try to bring about Yemos HaMoshiach through the living Moshiach of our generation.

There is one last belief that we have not yet mentioned because it is so terrible. That is the belief that the Rebbe is G-d, chas veshalom. There are very few who actually refer to the Rebbe as Boreinu – our Creator – which is pure idolatry. There are others who are more subtle in their belief and perhaps even fool themselves. They take the classic Chasidic doctrine that the Rebbe is the essence of G-d and understand it literally. They believe that the Rebbe is G-d because he has nullified himself to G-d. When one speaks and prays to the Rebbe, one is speaking and praying to G-d. This is avodah zarah – idolatry – and is punishable with death. Anyone who

bows to the Rebbe in prayer is violating one of the three cardinal sins. We will not expand on this idea because it is well beyond the scope of this work. But we pray that Hashem help those idolaters who believe that the Rebbe is literally the essence of G-d realize the error of their ways.