

Chapter 5:

What Counter-proofs can be Brought?

There are two types of proofs that are brought for the claim that a dead person can be Moshiach. The first type is passages from primary sources and the second is commentary on these sources. The former tries to demonstrate that Chazal considered it possible, or maybe even likely, that a resurrected figure can serve as Moshiach. The latter attempts to show that regardless of what we think the primary source actually says, there were commentators who may have thought differently. This distinction is important because it highlights that the value in a commentary's statement rests totally on the weight of who the commentator is and not on what text the author is explaining. For example, if a relatively unknown twentieth century rabbi wrote a commentary on the Talmud Yerushalmi in which he says that Moshiach can come from the dead, we can only conclude from this that this obscure

modern commentator thought the idea was possible. We cannot deduce any more than that. This clarity in the relative value of proofs is crucial in making a final evaluation of the evidence.

The texts that are generally brought revolve around statements that either Daniel, King David, or Moshe will be the future Moshiach. Since these righteous men are deceased we can infer that there is nothing in Judaism that contradicts the idea that Moshiach can come from the dead. Since, as we proved in the previous chapter, Moshiach cannot come from the dead, the burden is on us to explain these apparently explicit statements to the contrary. As we shall see, this has already been done by those much greater than we.

What Is His Name?

The first proof is a now-famous statement in the Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 98b that if Moshiach is from the living he is Rabbeinu HaKadosh (this was said during Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi's lifetime by his student Rav) and, if from the dead, Daniel. However, we believe that for this passage to be understood it must be read in its full context. While in isolation it seems like explicit proof that Moshiach can come from the dead, when it is seen as part of a larger passage its true meaning can be seen.

Rav said: The world was only created for David. Shmuel said: אמר רב לא אברי עלמא אלא לדוד. ושמואל אמר

For Moshe. Rabbi Yochanan said: For Moshiach. What is his [Moshiach's] name? The school of Rabbi Shila said: Shiloh is his name, as it says (B'reishis 49:10) "Until Shiloh comes." The school of Rabbi Yannai said: Yinon is his name, as it says (Tehillim 72:17) "May his name endure forever, may his name connote mastery (*yinon*) under the sun." The school of Rabbi Chanina said: Chanina is his name, as it says (Yirmiyahu 16:13) "For I will not grant you leniency (*chanina*).” And some say: Menachem ben Chizkiyah is his name, as it says (Eicha 1:16) "Because a comforter (*menachem*) to restore my soul is far from me.” The rabbis said: Chivra (leper) of the school of Rebbe is his name, as it says (Yishayahu 53:4) "But in truth, it was our ills that he bore, and our pains that he carried – but we had regarded him diseased, stricken by G-d, and afflicted.” Rav Nachman said: If he is from the living he is I, as it says (Yirmiyahu 30:21) "His leader will be from his midst and his ruler will emerge from within him.” Rav said: If he is from the living he is like (*kegon*) Rabbeinu HaKadosh. If he is from the dead he is like Daniel the most desirable man.

(Sanhedrin 98b)

למשה. ור' יוחנן אמר למשיח. מה שמו דבי ר' שילא אמרי שילה שמו שנאמר עד כי יבא שלה. דבי ר' ינאי אמרי ינון שמו שנאמר יהי שמו לעולם לפני שמש ינון שמו. דבי ר' חנינה אמר חנינה שמו שנאמר אשר לא אתן לכם חנינה. ויש אומרים מנחם בן חזקיה שמו שנאמר כי רחוק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי. ורבנן אמרי חיוורא דבי רבי שמו שנאמר אכן חליינו הוא נשא ומכאובינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבנהו נגוע מכה אלקים ומענה. אמר רב נחמן אי מן חייה הוא אנא שנאמר והיה אדירו ממנו ומשלו מקרבו יצא. אמר רב אי מן חייה הוא כגון רבינו הקדוש אי מן מתיא הוא כגון דניאל איש המודות.

Notice how the students of various schools identify their teachers as Moshiach. It is no coincidence that the students of R' Shila say that Moshiach's name is Shiloh and the students of R' Yannai say that Yinon is his name. They were certainly pointing to their mentors. If so, we have to ask exactly what is happening in this passage. It could be suggested that this represents various honest attempts to identify Moshiach. The students of R' Shila thought that he was Moshiach and the students of R' Yannai thought it was he. Rav Nachman thought that he was Moshiach. Rav thought that it was either Rabbeinu HaKadosh or, if from the dead, Daniel. While this explanation supports the claim that Moshiach can come from the dead, it has many difficulties. Why did the editors of the Gemara, who lived centuries after all these rabbis died, not comment? Since not all of these opinions could be correct, as there can only be one Moshiach, who was right? Why was Rabbi Akiva argued with over his belief that Bar Kochba was Moshiach and none of these scholars treated similarly? Furthermore, Rav Nachman declared that he might be Moshiach! Surely, the real Moshiach would know whether or not he is Moshiach.

There are two other explanations that avoid these problems. Recall from chapter 1 that in every generation there is someone who is the potential Moshiach, should the world merit it. If the entire Jewish people will repent then G-d will immediately send Moshiach and inaugurate Yemos HaMoshiach. For this to happen, there must always be a potential Moshiach waiting (whether he knows it or not) for the moment when and if he will be called into service.

The rabbis in the above passage were discussing who was the potential Moshiach. Certainly, the characteristics of any potential Moshiach are excellent indicators of what the actual Moshiach will be like. The students of R' Yannai said that it was he. Rav Nachman said that if we are discussing the current potential Moshiach, the one from the living, then it is certainly he, as he was descended from King David and was the leading scholar of his time. Rav, who lived before Rav Nachman, said that in his time the potential Moshiach was Rabbeinu HaKadosh. But if you want a perfect example of a past potential Moshiach, Daniel was one. He was a descendant of King David, a Jewish communal leader, and a man who endured great personal suffering.

An alternate explanation, and one that has been generally preferred by commentators, is that the above passage does not contain any attempts at all to determine the identity of either the actual or potential Moshiach. Rather, the rabbis were **describing** Moshiach. The students of R' Shila said that Moshiach would be peaceful (from *shalom*), like their mentor. The students of R' Chanina said that he will be merciful (from *chanun*), like their teacher. Rav Nachman said that Moshiach will be like him, descended from King David and politically powerful. And Rav said that a good living example of Moshiach was Rabbeinu HaKadosh and a good deceased example of whom Moshiach will be like is Daniel. They were giving examples of whom Moshiach will resemble and not attempting to identify him.

These two explanation are offered by Rashi.

If he is from the living he is like (*kegon*) Rabbeinu HaKadosh. If Moshiach is from those who are currently living he is certainly Rabbeinu HaKadosh, who endured suffering and was a righteous man, as it says in Bava Metzia (85a). If he was among those who already died, he was Daniel ‘the most desirable man’ who was subjected to suffering in the lions’ den and was a righteous man. The word “like” (*kegon*) is not meant specifically. Another explanation: Like Rabbeinu HaKadosh – This means that if there is an example of [Moshiach] among the living it is Rabbeinu HaKadosh. If there is an example among the dead it is like Daniel ‘the most desirable man’.

אי מן חייא הוא כגון רבינו הקדוש – אם משיח מאותן שחיים עכשיו ודאי רבינו הקדוש, דסובל תחלואים וחסיד גמור הוה, כדאמרינן בבבא מציעא ואם היה מאותן שמתו כבר - היה דניאל איש המודות שנדון ביסורין בגוב אריות וחסיד גמור היה, והאי כגון לאו דוקא, לישנא אחרינא: כגון רבינו הקדוש, כלומר, אם יש דוגמתו בחיים היינו רבינו הקדוש, ואם דוגמא הוא למתים, היינו כגון דניאל איש המודות.

(Rashi, Sanhedrin 98b)

According to Rashi’s first explanation, if we are discussing a Moshiach – a potential Moshiach – who is alive then it is definitely Rabbeinu HaKadosh. If we are discussing a potential Moshiach from among the dead, someone who was once a potential Moshiach, then we know that Daniel must have been the potential Moshiach of his generation. If Rashi was referring to the future redeemer he would have used the future, or at least the present, tense regarding Daniel. But he

does not. Rather he uses the past tense. “He was (*hayah*) Daniel.”

According to Rashi’s second explanation, the Gemara is simply describing Moshiach and giving examples of what he will be like. An example of what Moshiach will be like from among those living (at that time) was Rabbeinu HaKadosh. An example from among the dead is Daniel.

The Maharsha (sv Shiloh) prefers this last explanation that the entire passage is describing what Moshiach will be like.

It seems that they are all descriptive names and [Moshiach] will have them all just like Moshe who had many descriptive names.

נראה דכולהו שמות תוארים וכולהו איתנהו ביה כמו במשה שהיה לו כמה שמות תוארים.

Similarly, Abarbanel in his *Yeshuos Meshicho* (p. 47) writes:

They spoke about Moshiach’s name and not Moshiach himself because they were discussing Moshiach’s actions as implied by his name. Shiloh implies that there will be peace (*shalom*) and truth in his days. Yinon implies that he will be superior (*elyon*) to all kings...

אין מחלוקת בשמות אבל באו להגיד מעשיו ופעולותיו של מלך המשיח שהוא מה שיורה עליו שמו כי בהיות שמו שילה יורה ששלום ואמת יהיו בימיו ובהיות שמו ינון יורה שיהיה עליון למלכי ארץ...

In appendix B, we bring Maharal’s extensive treatment of

this topic which is similar to the Abarbanel's and Maharsha's approach. There is, however, another possible explanation of this passage that we will examine shortly.

David and Moshe

Another proof that is frequently brought is from the Yerushalmi Brachos 2:4.

The rabbis said: The King Moshiach, if he is from the living David is his name. If he is from the dead David is his name. R' Tanchuma said: I say that the reason is (Tehillim 18:51) "And shows mercy to His Moshiach David." Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levy said: Tzemach is his name. R' Yudan the son of R' Aivo said: Menachem is his name.

רבנן אמרי אהן מלכא משיחא אין מי הייא הו' דוד שמיה אין מי דמכייא הוא דוד שמיה א"ר תנחומא אנא אמרית טעמא ועושה חסד למשיחו לדוד ר' יהושע בן לוי אמר צמח שמו ר' יודן בריה דרבי אייבו אמר מנחם שמו.

Similarly, the following is from Eicha Rabbah 1:51.

What is the name of the King Moshiach? R' Abba bar Kahana said: Hashem is his name... R' Yehoshua ben Levy said: Tzemach is his name... R' Yudan in the name of R' Aivo said: Menachem is his name... R' Chanina said: They do not disagree. The calculations of each are the same as Menachem is Tzemach... The students of R' Shila

מה שמו של המשיח ר' אבא בר כהנא ה' שמו... ר' יהושע בן לוי אומר צמח שמו... ר' יודן בשם ר' איבו אמר מנחם שמו... א"ר חנינא ולא פליגי חושבנא דדין כחושבנא דדין הוא מנחם הוא צמח... דבי ר' יודן

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said: Shiloh is the name of Moshiach... The students of R' Chanina said: Chanina is his name... The students of R' Yannai said: Yinon is his name... R' Biba Sanigoria said: Nehira is his name... R' Yehuda the son of Simon said in the name of R' Shmuel the son of R' Yitzchak: The King Moshiach, if he is from the living his name is David and if he is from the dead his name is David.

שילא אמרי שילה
שמו של משיח... דבי ר'
חנינה אמר חנינה שמו...
דבי ר' ינאי אמרי ינון
שמו... ר' ביבא סניגוריא
אמר נהירא שמו... ר'
יהודה בר' סימון אמר בשם
ר' שמואל בר' יצחק הדין
מלכא משיחא אי מחייה הוא
דוד שמייה אי מימיתיה הוא
דוד שמייה.

According to the Yerushalmi and Eicha Rabbah, David is a candidate for Moshiach. Furthermore, the Zohar implies in a number of places (Sh'mos 54a, 120a) and is understood by commentators as saying that Moshe Rabbeinu is a candidate for Moshiach.

Taking these passages literally, however, is problematic. The first and most glaring problem is that Moshe is not descended from either King David or from Yehuda! If Yaakov prophesied that Moshiach will come from Yehuda (B'reishis 49:10) how can Moshe, a descendant of Levy, be Moshiach?

Furthermore, 1 Divrei HaYamim (28:5-6, 29:1) makes it very clear that the royal dynasty was passed from David to Shlomo. Based on this, the Rambam writes in three separate places that Moshiach will be a descendant of Shlomo.

Neither Moshe nor David are descendants of Shlomo. The Rambam writes as part of his twelfth principle:

Included in this principle is that there is no king to the Jewish people except from David and the descendants of Shlomo specifically. Anyone who disagrees with [the status of] this family denies G-d and His prophets.

ומכלל היסוד הזה שאין
מלך לישראל אלא מדוד
ומזרע שלמה דוקא. וכל
החולק בענין משפחה הזו
הרי זה כפר בה' ובדברי
נביאיו.

(Commentary to Mishna, Sanhedrin, ed. Kafah p. 144)

Similarly, the Rambam includes this in his Sefer HaMitzvos, prohibition 362. This is what he writes in his Iggeres Teiman:

And this, my brothers, is an important principle from the principles of Jewish thought – that there must rise a man from the descendants of specifically Shlomo the son of David.

וזה אחינו יסוד גדול
מיסודות הדעה הישראלית
שבהכרח יעמוד אדם מזרע
שלמה בן דוד דוקא.

(Iggeres Teiman, ed. Kafah p. 47)

While the Rambam did not include this in the Mishneh Torah, it would be incorrect to say that he changed his mind from what he had previously written. This is because towards the end of his life, long after he finished the Mishneh Torah, he affirmed in a letter the contents of Iggeres Teiman (see what the Satmar Rav wrote regarding

the chronology of the Mishneh Torah and Iggeres Teiman in his Maamar Shalosh Shvuos ch. 31). We must then ask how the Rambam could not only disagree with the Yerushalmi, but say that anyone who follows the Yerushalmi denies G-d and His prophets.

To add to this, in the previous chapter we quoted the Rebbe as saying that King David cannot be Moshiach. It is also implicit in those words and explicit in Likkutei Sichos vol. 11 p. 8 that Moshe Rabbeinu cannot be Moshiach either. But, if so, what about the Yerushalmi and the Zohar?

The Soul of Moshiach

The answer to this can be found in the Or HaChaim's commentary to B'reishis 49:11.

It should not be difficult to you that we are dividing the verse, part in the time of Moshe and part in the time of Moshiach. Do you not know the words of the holy Zohar (Sh'mos 120a) that Moshe, the redeemer of our ancestors, will redeem us and return the sons to their borders as it says "What was will be" (Koheles 1:9) [and in the Hebrew] the first letters of each word spell out Moshe? It should not be difficult to you that you should ask, "Is not the King Moshiach from the tribe of

ולא יקשה בעיניך שאנו מחלקים דברי הכתוב, חלק בימי משה וחלק בימי המשיח כי הלא ידעת דברי הזוהר הקדוש כי משה הוא הגואל אשר גאל את אבותינו הוא יגאל אותנו וישיב בנים לגבולם דכתיב מיה שיהיה ה'וא שיהיה, ר"ת משה, ולא יקשה בעיניך דבר זה באמרו הלא מלך המשיח משבט יהודה

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Yehuda and a descendant of King David, and some say David himself is the King Moshiach as it says 'And My servant David will be a king over them' (Yechezkel 37:24) – as it implies? If so, how can we say it will be Moshe who comes from the tribe of Levy?"

You must know that the soul of Moshe comes from all twelve tribes of Israel and all of the 600,000 [Jewish souls] were branches. The branch of the family of David is from Moshe. We therefore find that [Moshe] in the desert was a king, priest, Levy, prophet, wise man, and brave man because he contained all the branches of holiness. In the future, the root of royalty will be revealed as being of Moshe because he is the King Moshiach, he is David, he is Yinon and Shiloh.

מזרעו של דוד המלך ע"ה,
וי"א דוד עצמו מלך המשיח
דכתיב ועבדי דוד מלך
עליהם, כמשמעו, וא"כ היאך
אנו אומרים שהוא משה,
הבא משבט לוי.

יש לך לדעת כי בחינת
נשמת משה ע"ה היא כלולה
מיי"ב שבטי ישראל, כי כל
הס' ריבוא היו ענפים ע"ה,
וענף שבטו של דוד במשה
הוא, ולזה תמצאנו בארץ
מדבר שהיה מלך וכהן ולוי
ונביא וחכם וגבור, שהיה
כולל כל הענפים שבקדושה.
ולעתיד לבא תתגלה בעולם
שרש המלכות שבמשה,
שהוא עצמו והוא דוד, והוא
ינן ושילה.

According to the Or HaChaim, when the Yerushalmi and the Zohar say that Moshe will be Moshiach they do not mean physically. They are not implying that Moshe will be resurrected and rule as Moshiach. Nor do they mean that David will physically be Moshiach. Rather, their souls will be that of Moshiach. Whoever Moshiach will be, whenever this holy man will live, he will have in him the soul of Moshe and David.

Similarly, the Arizal writes the following in his Sefer HaGilgulim ch. 71.

It is known that Moshe was [a reincarnation of] Hevel and in him was mixed both good and bad. Moshe was the root of all Jewish souls from the good part – “And He saw that it was good” (Sh’mos 2:2) – and the erev rav from the bad part... In every generation Moshe comes through reincarnation because G-d does not want to accept the erev rav... Nowadays, most of the people in our generation are reincarnations of the erev rav. It is for this that Moshe must be reincarnated every fifty years. Because he is the source of all Jewish souls – to fix them... This is what is meant by (Yishayahu 52:13) “See, my servant shall prosper.” He is Moshe Rabbeinu, he is Moshiach. Shiloh in gematria is Moshe. Our sages also said that the final redeemer will be just like the first redeemer.

וידוע כי משה הוא הבל ונתערב טוב ורע ומשה היה שורש כל נשמת ישראל מחלק הטוב ותרא אותו כי טוב הוא וערב רב היה מחלק הרע... הנה בכל דור בא משה בסוד העיבור לפי שהקב"ה לא היה רוצה לקבל הערב רב... ועתה רוב אנשי דורנו הם מגיגול הערב רב לזה הוצרך לבא משה לעיבור אחד לני שנה לפי שהוא שורש כל ישראל לתקנם... וז"ש הנה ישכיל עבדי והוא משיח כי שילה בגי' משה וארז"ל כגואל הראשון כך גואל האחרון.

Moshe will be Moshiach, but in reincarnation. When these passages say that Moshe will be Moshiach they mean that Moshiach will have Moshe's soul.

These passages do not speak of Moshe or David being resurrected as Moshiach. If they did we would have the

problem that neither Moshe nor David is a descendant of Shlomo, as the Rambam requires of Moshiach. Rather, whoever Moshiach will be he will have the soul of Moshe and David.

Similarly, we can find many kabbalists who speak of Moshiach as coming down from the Garden of Eden to bring in Yemos HaMoshiach. Some bring this as a proof that a dead person can be Moshiach. However, what they are speaking of is the **soul** of Moshiach, not a live person who is concealed or a dead person who is resurrected. The soul of Moshiach will be implanted into the body of a person who is alive. Therefore, if the Rebbe had the soul of Moshiach then he will come back as Moshiach. However, he will not come back as himself but as whichever rabbi will be chosen to be the physical Moshiach.

This can also explain the Gemara in Sanhedrin we quoted above. The discussion in the Gemara was not about who is Moshiach, who might be Moshiach, or who is similar to Moshiach. Rather, as the Or HaChaim hints at the end of his commentary, the passage is about who has the soul of Moshiach. Daniel did. According to Rav, Rabbeinu HaKadosh did. According to Rav Nachman, he also had the soul of Moshiach. It does not mean that any of them were intended to inaugurate Yemos HaMoshiach, whether alive or resurrected. It just means that they were reincarnations of the soul that was in Moshe and David, and will eventually be in Moshiach.

This would answer another difficulty that was pointed out by the famous Munkatcher Rebbe, R' Chaim Elazar Shapira, in his Divrei Torah vol. 4 no. 84. As we've seen, Moshiach must be a descendant of Shlomo the son of David. However, the Gemara in Ksuvos 62b tells us that Rabbeinu HaKadosh was not descended from Shlomo but from Shfatya the son of David. How then could Rav have said that Rabbeinu HaKadosh was the Moshiach or the potential Moshiach? But if he was only saying that Rabbeinu HaKadosh had the soul of Moshiach then this problem is solved.

Similarly, when later authorities suggested that the Arizal, the Or HaChaim, or Rav Shachna (the rebbe of the Rama) were Moshiach, while they could have been saying that they were the **potential** Moshiachs of their generation, they could also have merely been saying that these holy sages were reincarnations of Moshiach's soul. Perhaps there was not any implication at all that they would bring in Yemos HaMoshiach. Maybe the intent was that they shared the soul of Moshiach.

Rashi and Abarbanel

While we have seen that none of the primary sources indicate that Moshiach can physically come from the dead, we must also address the commentaries. There are a number of commentaries that are frequently quoted as saying that Moshiach can and will be resurrected. As we shall see, they say nothing of the sort.

The most frequently quoted source is Rashi on Sanhedrin 98b regarding Daniel being Moshiach. Rashi offers two explanations, the first being that Daniel actually was Moshiach. However, as we showed above, this is referring to Daniel being the potential Moshiach of his generation (or as bearing the soul of Moshiach). It therefore has no bearing on the discussion of whether Moshiach can be a resurrected person.

Another oft-quoted source is the Abarbanel in his Yeshuos Meshicho. The relevant passage is tucked in the middle of a very long and drawn out chapter in which Abarbanel explains a midrash that Christian missionaries would quote to try to prove that Jesus is (chas veshalom) Moshiach. The midrash says that Moshiach was born at the time of the Churban and was taken away by demons. Now, granted, according to Christians Jesus died forty years before the Churban and could therefore not be the subject of the midrash. But such simple facts do not stop missionaries. Abarbanel thus spent a good deal of effort explaining this midrash in three different ways.

It seems to me that in this matter there are three ways. The first is a literal way that is, to me, insufficient and incorrect. However, it is in the Ashkenazic approach to understanding legends... [The first way:] In this passage the mother thought that her son, due to his bad fate, was taken by demons. But it

ומה שנראה לי בענין הלז
הוא באחד משלשה דרכים
הדרך הראשון הוא על דרך
פשטי בלתי מספיק ובלתי
נכון אצלי הוא כפי דרך
האשכנזים בהבנת האגדות
ופירושיהם... ושהיה מאמר
הזה כפי מחשבתה שחשבה

was not true because the boy was taken with G-d's will and placed in the earthly Garden of Eden. There he remains until the time comes that G-d will call him. It is therefore known that this is what happened and that he has lived a long life from then until today, like the lifespans of the early ones and even longer, and he is still in the Garden of Eden... One can see that this passage remains strange and difficult. If I were to explain it literally I would say that this Moshiach died because of the sins of his generation. He was separated from this wicked community and his soul placed in the heavenly Garden of Eden... According to this, when G-d returns the remnant of Zion he will be the King Moshiach and will rule over his people. Do not be troubled that the King Moshiach will rise in resurrection because this was already doubted in Sanhedrin 98b and Rav (Assi) said, "If from the living like Rabbeinu HaKadosh and if from the dead like Daniel 'the most desirable of men.'"

שעילעוולין ורוהין לרוע
מזלו לקחיהו אבל לא היה
הדבר כן כי נלקח ברצון
אלוקי והושם בג"ע שבארץ
ושם הוא עומד עד עת בא
דברו אמרת ה' צרפתהו
ונודע א"כ שכך היה הענין
ושהוא חיה חיים ארוכים
מאז עד עתה כימי
הראשונים ויותר ושעוד הוא
ישיבתו בגן עדן... והנך
רואה בעיניך שלא ימלט
מהספק והזריות שזכרתי
בראש ההגדה ואם באתי
לפרשה לפי פשוטה יותר
הייתי בוחר לומר שמת
המשיח ההוא בעון הדור
ההוא ונבדל מתוך העדה
הרעה ההיא והושמה נפשו
בג"ע של מעלה... וכפי זה
בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון יהיה
אז מלך המשיח וימלוך על
עמו ואל יקשה עליך שיהיה
מלך המשיח מן הקמים
בתחייה כי כבר נסתפקו על
זה בפ' חלק ואמר רב (אסי)
אם מן חייא הוא כגון רבינו
הקדוש אם מן מתייא כגון
דניאל איש חמודות...

[The second way:] The tenth study is that this Jew returned a second time to find Menachem and the mother told him that demons took him from her and hid him. This hints to the second type of the time of Moshiach, the time of possibility [when Moshiach will come if we merit it]. It therefore says that the Jew returned a second time [to try to find the child] because the first time referred to the appointed time for Moshiach and the second time to the era of possibility. Regarding this, the mother said the demons, i.e. the sins of the generations, prevented the good and stalled the coming of Moshiach...

[The third way:] The demons taking him refers, as I explained, to the sins of the generations. Or perhaps it refers to the Christian and Muslim nations as the demons who took Moshiach from the Jewish people because they claim that Moshiach came to them. It is as if they stole [the concept of] Moshiach from our nation...

(Yeshuos Meshicho 2:1)

והלימוד העשירי הוא שחזר היהודי פעם שנית לבקש על מנחם ושאמרה לו אמו ששדים רוחין ועלעולין לקחוהו ממנה והטמינוהו רמזו בזה לגבול השני מזמן המשיח והוא זמן האפשריות אשר זכרתי ולכן אמרו שבא פעם שנית לדרוש ממנה כי בפעם הראשונה תרמוז לזמן הגלות המחויב והשנית רומזת זמן גבול האפשרית ועליו אמרה אמו שהוא על האומה ששדים רוחין ועלעולין ר"ל עונות הדורות ופשעיהם מנעו הטוב ועכבו ממנו המשיח...

ששדים ועלעולין לקחוהו ממנה שירמוזו כמו שזכרתי לעונות ישראל ופשעי הדורות ואולי כיוונו בזה לאומות אדום וישמעאל שהם שדים ועלעולין לקחו המשיח מן האומה כי הם אמרו שבא המשיח אליהם וכאלו גזלו אותה מהאומה ולקחוה מהם.

Abarbanel's first approach is to take the midrash literally as, he claims, Ashkenazim tend to. If there really was a baby who was Moshiach and whose mother claimed that he was taken away by demons, he must have been taken to the Garden of Eden where he waits to emerge as Moshiach. Abarbanel grants that this is difficult and suggests that the boy died and will be resurrected as Moshiach. Do not be shocked that Moshiach can be a resurrected person, Abarbanel tells us, because it is mentioned in the Gemara regarding Daniel. This explanation, however, Abarbanel deems to be insufficient and incorrect (*bilti maspik ubilti nachon*). He therefore offers two allegorical explanations that are evidently more sufficient and more correct in his estimation.

Thus the “proof” that Moshiach can come from the dead is from a rejected attempt of a Sephardi to offer an Ashkenazic explanation of a midrash that he himself said is insufficient and incorrect. Furthermore, we have to remember who the Abarbanel was. He was a brilliant commentator of the Bible and communal leader. However, those who are familiar with his writings know that he is not one on whom to rely regarding statements of traditional Jewish theology. For example, in his commentary to 1 Shmuel 11 Abarbanel quotes the Gemara in Shabbos 56a that David did not sin with Bassheva and then summarily dismisses the sages. In his introduction to Yehoshua he quotes the Gemara in Bava Basra 14b about who wrote the various books of the Bible and then disagrees with the Gemara. In his introduction to Yirmiyahu he actually suggests that Yirmiyahu was a bad

author, which is why there are so many unclear verses in the book. This is why he is generally referred to as Don Yitzchak Abarbanel or as HaSar HaGadol (the high minister), referring to his important political positions. While there is no question that Abarbanel was a brilliant philosopher and commentator, he is not always a reliable source for authentic rabbinic tradition, and there is no question that in all matters normative Judaism would follow Rambam and Ramban rather than Abarbanel in cases of disagreement.

Sdei Chemed

It is frequently said that the Sdei Chemed understood the Gemara as meaning that Moshiach can be from the dead. However, this is wrong on two points. The first is that the Sdei Chemed himself never wrote anything of the sort. He did print in his books letters from his contemporaries commenting on his writings. The following letter from R' Aryeh Leib Lipkin discusses Ramban's statement in a disputation that he rejects a midrash. R' Lipkin argues that Ramban did not mean it and, even if he did, it was only because the midrash is implicitly contradicted by a Gemara. As part of this valuable letter, R' Lipkin goes off on a tangent about how Moshiach can come and an explanation of the same midrash with which Abarbanel deals.

The above story of demons taking away the boy is very simple. In my opinion, the explanation is that they took him to a place in this world to

שמה שמוזכר בעובדא הנ"ל
שרוה נשאו להילד פשוט
מאד לענ"ד שפי' שנשאו

be with a righteous scholar who would raise him and teach him from his youth to be a great righteous man and a tremendous Torah scholar... However, when he reached old age and the nation had still not merited Moshiach he died. Because, as the Gemara in Sanhedrin 98a says, there is one way [for Moshiach to come] – that he will be righteous and poor, riding on a donkey – and they also said, “Today if you listen to His voice.” For that way, Moshiach must be one of the righteous people of the generation (if they merit it a little). There should therefore be in each generation one righteous person who, if they merit it, will be the messenger by way of Eliyahu [i.e. Moshiach]. If they do not merit it, he will be no different from other righteous people. If one dies then there will be another worthy man in the generation to take his place... There is another way [in which Moshiach can come] and that is through a great merit. Then he will come on clouds of the sky like a man, as it says in Sanhedrin 98a. They said regarding this way in Sanhedrin 98b, “If he is from the dead, Daniel ‘the most desirable man.’”

(Sdei Chemed, vol. 1 P’as HaSadeh Kelalim 70)

למקום א' בעוה"ז אצל
חכם בתורה וצדיק להתגדל
שם שילמדוהו תור
ויחנכוהו מנעוריו להיות
צדיק נשגב וגדול מאד
בתורה... ובאחרית ימיו
כשלא זכו הדור נסתלק מן
העולם ולפי שאמרו בגמרא
דסנהדרין צ"ח ע"א שיש
אופן א' שיהי צדיק ונושע
עני ורוכב על החמור וגם
אמרו שם היום אם בקולי
תשמעו ובאופן הנ"ל ראוי
להיות רק א' מצדיקי הדור
(היינו אם יזכו רק מעט)
וצריך להיות בכל דור הא'
הראוי אם יזכו הוא יהי
השליח ע"י אלי' ואם לא
יזכו יהי כשאר הצדיקים
בלא הפרש ובמת ר"ל אחד
צ"ל אחר בדור במקומו
שיהי ראוי... ולפי שיש
עוד אופן בזכות גדול דעם
ענני שמיא כבר אינש אתא
וכמ"ש בסנהדרין צ"ח ע"א
לכן אמרו על אופן זה
בסנהדרין שם צ"ח ע"ב אם
מן מיתה הוא דניאל איש
חמודות.

R' Lipkin here offers a very difficult explanation of possible events. He suggests that there are two ways in which Moshiach can come. If the Jewish people merit it a little then the potential Moshiach of the generation will rise to be Moshiach in a non-miraculous way. If we merit it greatly then Moshiach will be resurrected and come down from the sky in a miraculous fashion. The reason that this is difficult is that the Gemara on which he bases this explanation differentiates between whether we merit it or not, not whether we merit it a little or a lot. Furthermore, there is no precedent for his taking literally the statement that Moshiach can come from the dead. In a passage that we omitted for the sake of brevity, R' Lipkin explains the talmudic passage about Moshiach's name as having to do with who was the potential Moshiach of the generation. If so, why does he change this explanation when he reaches the end of the passage?

However, the viability of R' Lipkin's commentary is not relevant to us. What is important is that he acknowledges that Moshiach can come from the dead. Notice, though, that this only applies to Moshiach's arrival if we merit it greatly. In this case, and only in this case, R' Lipkin claims that Moshiach can be a resurrected person. This means that the Rebbe can only be Moshiach if all the Jews in the world do tshuvah and become observant. We must **greatly** merit Moshiach's arrival. In any other scenario the Rebbe cannot be Moshiach. And for even this view we have support from only one single obscure nineteenth century rabbi.

It is crucial to note that many other sources quoted, that turn out to be largely irrelevant when read closely, refer only to Moshiach's arrival if we merit it. For example, the Or HaChaim is sometimes quoted as saying in his commentary to Bamidbar 24:17 that Moshiach will come from the dead. However, what he really says is that if people merit Moshiach coming then he will come from the sky. This is, of course, what Daniel 7:13 and Sanhedrin 98a say and merely refers to a miraculous arrival of Moshiach. It has nothing to do with resurrection and, even if it did, only applies if every one of the millions of Jews in the world would repent. Similarly, the Ben Yehoyada on Sanhedrin 98b is sometimes quoted as saying that Moshiach can come from the dead. However, one who looks in the commentary finds nothing of the sort.

The Munkatcher Rebbe, R' Chaim Elazar Shapira, is quoted from his Divrei Torah vol. 4 no. 84 as saying that the Gemara in Sanhedrin 98b means literally that Rabbeinu HaKadosh or Daniel will be Moshiach. However, he does not say that at all. In fact, he says the exact opposite. He points out that Rabbeinu HaKadosh was not descended from Shlomo and was therefore not eligible to be Moshiach. Therefore, he argues, the Gemara cannot be discussing who will be Moshiach. Rather, it must be describing the attributes of Moshiach, like Rashi suggests in his second explanation.

Also quoted is R' Yehuda Chayoun in his recently published Otzros Acharis HaYamim (and, in English, When Moshiach

Comes). While it is true that R' Chayoun quotes both of Rashi's explanations of the Gemara in Sanhedrin 98b, nowhere does he say that Moshiach can come from the dead. He is troubled by the Rambam's statement that Moshiach will be unknown before being revealed. How can Daniel become Moshiach if he is already famous? He therefore concludes, according to Rashi's **first** explanation (the one that supposedly supports the idea of Moshiach coming from the dead), as follows.

Lest Rambam contradict Rashi, we must posit that, even according to his first explanation, people did not believe R. Yehudah HaNasi was Moshiach, as they were not even sure Moshiach was alive or dead. They were simply emphasizing that each person mentioned in the gemara was suited to be Moshiach in his generation.

(R' Yehuda Chayoun, When Moshiach Comes, p. 66)

The phrase "Lest Rambam contradict Rashi" implies that Rashi seems to contradict Rambam, who says that Moshiach will be unknown before he is revealed. What did Rashi say that would contradict Rambam? Rashi said that either Daniel or R. Yehudah HaNasi is Moshiach. However, they are both famous and, if either is Moshiach, he would not be unknown. Additionally, if R. Yehudah HaNasi can be Moshiach then Daniel can as well. That would mean that these people believed that Moshiach could come from the dead. Rather, "They were simply emphasizing that each person mentioned in the gemara was suited to be Moshiach **in his generation.**"

We have seen that there is no source at all in Judaism for a Moshiach who comes from the dead. The passages from the Gemara and Midrash that are cited turn out to be no proof at all. Indeed, we offered three explanations that are more likely than the suggestion that the Gemara refers to a resurrected Moshiach. Furthermore, the only commentators in the fifteen hundred years since the completion of the Talmud to say that Moshiach can come from the dead are Abarbanel in an explanation he himself rejects and an obscure nineteenth century rabbi who claims that Moshiach can be resurrected if we “greatly merit it.” Contrast that to the clear messages from the rishonim in the last chapter. Rambam says that if a claimant to the position of Moshiach does not succeed then he is not the Moshiach. There are no second chances after death! The same is echoed throughout the disputation literature and is stated explicitly by the Rebbe himself. Moshiach cannot come from the dead and the evidence that is supposed to prove the contrary has turned out to be inconclusive at best.