

## Part XII

**Skeptic:** Do you mind if I ask a rather simplistic question?

**Believer:** Those are usually the most difficult to address.

**Skeptic:** Why?

**Believer:** Because a simple question usually has a simple answer. And a simple answer is the most difficult answer to accept.

**Skeptic:** Anyway, here's my question. Why are you always speaking of a future perfect world in terms of Moshiach, the person? If humanity has a destiny and goal, if history is the evolution toward a state of harmony and perfection, why the need for the individual human being you call Moshiach?

**Believer:** Look at the last 5,000 years of human experience: every major movement and instrument of change, positive or negative, beneficial or destructive, centered upon an individual. The religions which deeply affected the lives of hundreds of millions, the infamous wars and carnages which swept the earth, the movements on behalf of oppressed peoples, the great revolutions in philosophy, art and technology---all are identified with a specific individual. There was always a leader who inspired and motivated his followers and whose influence ultimately extended beyond his community and his generation.

**Skeptic:** What you're saying is that that's the way we are, that this is an inescapable fact of human nature. But why are we this way? Is this the way we ought to be? Is it not a weakness on our part that we cannot do anything on our own, that we must be lead by the hand like small children?

**Believer:** That we are inspired by leaders does not mean that "we cannot do anything on our own." No leader can move us to something that we do not already desire on some level, or enable us to do things which we do not already possess the aptitude and ability for. It is we who are doing these things; things which we already wanted to do and were already capable of doing. The role of the leader is that of a lamplighter. When the lamplighter approaches the lamp, all necessary elements to produce light are already present: the oil, the wick, the vessel designed to contain them and to keep the flame going. The lamplighter adds nothing of substance. He merely touches his flame to the wick, stimulating the release of the latent energy and luminary potential which the lamp contains. Moshiach does not come to do the work of humanity. He is the spark that ignites the soul of every man and woman on earth. Moshiach is an individual who will kindle the potential good within each and every one of us into glowing reality.

**Skeptic:** So we need a white knight on a white donkey to jump-start our souls. That's how G-d made us. But Why? Why must we be dependent on someone else? Could we not have been given the tools to "ignite our potential" on our own?

**Believer:** Life is created by the means of the relationship between man and woman. Now, let us take the nature of existence back to the drawing board: Why the need for male and female? Surely all creatures could have been created with the capacity to reproduce on their own!

**Skeptic:** Well thank G-d it wasn't designed that way. We would have been deprived of one of the most beautiful and fulfilling aspects of our lives.

**Believer:** It's far more than one of life's aspects: relationships--that is to say, the concept of a giver-recipient partnership--are the very essence of life itself. The most obvious and basic of these is the creation of life through the union between the giver and initiator, man, and the recipient and nurturer, woman. But it extends to all areas of life. At the heart of a functioning society is the flow of resources and goods between individuals: commerce, trade and credit are indispensable to life as we know it. Charity and generosity are deeply ingrained in the human soul: every right-thinking individual believes in the responsibility of the haves toward the have-nots. Again, G-d could certainly have created us as self-sufficient entities. But then, as you said, life would be quite empty and unfulfilled. The same is true on the intellectual and moral level.

We are not self-contained worlds---we give and take, teach and learn, influence and are influenced. Every individual is a teacher, with the ability to bestow upon others insights and qualities that are unique to him alone. But the richness of life's relationships is that they also include a passive, receiving element, as well. So every man is also a student, a recipient who awaits a stimulating "spark" to ignite his latent potentials.

**Skeptic:** Still I ask: Why must this "igniting spark" come from a human being? You say that the Torah is G-d's blueprint for life. So why can't we realize the "recipient" aspect of our lives by opening the books and learning directly from them?

**Believer:** Why to you prefer a book to an individual?

**Skeptic:** Because every person has his or her own axe to grind. Who can you trust nowadays? What is to be gained by a mortal Moshiach?

**Believer:** Any parent will tell you that, ultimately, the only way to educate a child is by example. You can employ all sorts of inventive ways to impart an idea or a value but, more than anything else, the child will learn from your character and behavior. Books and other media may stimulate and inspire us but only rarely do they move us to take action--- especially action that demands much of us. Moshiach is a "book" authored by G-d---only not one of paper and ink but of flesh and blood. He is an individual who personifies, in the most absolute and unequivocal manner, what it is that man was created to be. As a living, breathing Torah, he is the optimal (and, ultimately, the only possible) instrument to bring to light the goodness and perfection that is intrinsic to the soul of man.