

3In those days Yohanan the Immerser came, proclaiming in the wilderness of Judea² and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

—commentary—

3:1 Yohanan the Immerser - In the days of Herod Antipas, Yohanan came, teaching "Jews to follow the way of righteousness, every man to deal equitably with his neighbor, to walk in piety before God and to come for immersion" (*Josephus, Antiquities 18:2*). He came from an Aaronic family and was therefore a priest (cf. *Luke 1:5; Gospel according to the Hebrews in Panarion 30:13:6*).

3:2 The kingdom of Heaven - In Ar. Malkuta d'Shamaya מלכותא דשמיא. It's a widely spread expression from the second Temple era: It refers to the manifestation of God's sovereignty upon the person, the global awareness and understanding that the God of Israel is the only true God, and that he reigns over creation, even over the pagan nations, as it's written: "And HaShem shall be king over all the earth: in that day HaShem will be one and his name will be one" (*Zech 14:9*). This is the beginning of God's kingdom: Accepting over oneself the supremacy, kingship and oneness of HaShem. Every day the observant Jew brings this to his attention by reciting the Shema prayer (*Berakhot 14b*). Accepting this truth is called: "receiving the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven" קבלת עול מלכות שמים (*Mishna Berakhot 2:2*) or "Heaven's yoke" (*Sanhedrin 111b*). This acceptance leads obviously to submission to God's will, which is defined as "bearing the yoke of the Torah" (*Avot 3:5; Bava Bathra 8a*). The "yoke" here is a symbol of submission with no negative connotation. This awareness is to be experienced in many different levels (which probably have to be taken into consideration whenever this expression is heard): first of all, in a personal individual level, then in a national level (meaning the nation of Israel), and then in a global and even cosmic level; also, in a spiritual level, as well as in a physical level. Rabbi Gamliel prayed the Shema on the first night of his wedding, even though he was exempt according to Jewish law, but he answered that he didn't want to separate himself from 'the kingdom of Heaven' even for a moment (*Mishna Berakhot 2:5*). It is expected that the eschatological revelation of this kingdom will be fully realized with the coming of the king Messiah, whose kingdom will bring judgment to the wicked of the earth and freedom to Israel, as it is written: "The God of Heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed... and the kingdom shall... consume all these kingdoms" (*Dan 2:44; cf. Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael, Shirata 10 on Ex 15:18*). The kingdom of Heaven can only be born through the pangs of refinement; for it goes hand in hand with retribution for the idolatrous nations, the abolition of idolatry, and the purging of those who were contaminated with paganism and wickedness (cf. *Targum Zephaniah 3:1-9; Targum Isaiah 24:21-23; 28:5-6*). "All men shall take upon themselves the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven when casting away their idols" (*Mekhilta Beshalakh, Amaleq 2*). The gathering of the exiles from the oppressive forces is also a sign of the coming of the heavenly kingdom. "How beautiful are the feet of the herald on the mountains, announcing peace, heralding good tidings, publishing salvation, saying to the congregation of Tzion: the kingdom of your God is revealed" (*Targum Isaiah 52:7*). It's because of all the above that Yohanan's heralding of these good tidings is preceded by this serious warning: Repent. Living in obedience to the Torah is how we experience God's Kingdom on us and reach the consciousness of the Messianic era, which is the last stage in human spiritual evolution.

3:2 Repent - The condition for experiencing the final redemption and the global kingdom of Heaven on earth was national repentance. Prophecies are usually conditional to Israel's behavior. From the N"t point of view, their redeemer had come, but now it depended on them to repent and accept it or to experience judgment. Rabbi Yohanan taught: "Great is repentance, for it brings about redemption, as it is said (*Is 59:20*): For a redeemer will come to Tzion, and unto those in Yaqov that repent from transgression. i.e. Why will a redeemer come to Tzion? Because of those who repent from transgression" (*Yoma 86b*). The Tanna Eliezer said, "If Israel repent, they will be redeemed, if not, they won't be redeemed... the Holy One will set upon them a king whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman's, whereby Israel shall engage in repentance" (*Sanhedrin 97b*). Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi pointed out a contradiction, for it is written [concerning the coming of Messiah]: "In its time" but it's also written "I will hasten it" (*Is 60:22*). The meaning is that if they [the generation] are worthy, I will hasten it, and if not [they will have to wait for him to come] at its due time (*Sanhedrin 98a*). So, what is repentance? **Tshuvah** means turning both to God and from sin. It doesn't matter how many atonements come to cover us, there's no forgiveness if we don't do penitence (*Lam 5:21*). There's also a mystical meaning, for the sin has caused God's Name to be divided in this lower world; the last Hei ה in God's name is attached to the earth and the concept of "Kingdom" (the sefirah of Malkhut). Tshuvah תשובה represents 'Returning the Hei' (Tashuv-hei תשובה) to God's name, and therefore causing the awareness of God's complete name, so it is written (*Zech 14:9*), On that day HaShem - the four letters Name - will be one and his name will be one; all will be connected, allowing the perfect flow of Divine energy into our reality, and therefore, causing us to experience the kingdom of Heaven (cf. *Zohar III:122b*).

³This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah [Is 40:3]:

A voice of one calling in the desert, prepare a way for Adonai, make his paths plain.

⁴And as to this Yohanan, his clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather girdle around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Yarden, ⁶and they were immersed by him in the river Yarden as they confessed their sins.

—commentary—

3:3 Prepare a way for Adonai - In the direct meaning, this is a reminder that the end of the exile and the redemption are coming one day - "either before its time because of merits, or if they receive complete punishment for their sins, or even if they are not meritorious he will redeem them at the set time" (*Malbim on Isaiah 40:1*). Here it's taken even deeper than that. "The voice that calls" is the holy spirit (*cf. Rashi*), and the herald of Messiah is Eliyahu (*Mal 3:23*).

3:3 Make his paths plain - The author has decided to rephrase the verse - as Targumim usually do. Isaiah reads: "make plain in the wilderness a path for our God"; in Hebrew: 'Yashru Baravah Mesilah L'eloheinu'. The first letters of each word form the acronym of "Mashiakh ben Yosef", and the word Yashru ישרו (making plain) is connected to the name Yeshurun ישרון - which is also associated with, and has the same numerical value with 'Messiah ben Yosef' משיח בן יוסף (= 566) (*cf. Qol haTor 2:64*). The Messiah ben Yosef we are talking about is the spiritual force that prepares the way for the final redemption, before the coming of the King Messiah. In other words, if the generation does national repentance, Yohanan would be the embodiment of this heralding force and the Son of David would come immediately after him. This is the reason that 566 equals "Yohanan haMatbil Shmo" יוחנן המטביל שמו (his name is Yohanan the Immerser). And the Name Yohanan (= 124) equals "Qol Qore bamidbar" (A voice calling in the desert) in ordinal numbers. In Aramaic he's called "Yuhanon ma'amdana" יוחנן מעמדנא, which is also 124 in ordinal numbers, and in normal Gematria it equals Na'ar נער, which alludes to one possessing the qualities of this redemptive force called Messiah ben Yosef (*Qol haTor 2:94*). Why do I call it a Force and not a person? Because if Israel does complete Repentance they won't need a Messiah ben Yosef, but rather Messiah ben David (the king) will come immediately (*cf. Avraham ben Eliezer haLevi on Nevuat haYeled*). This is to show that at the time of this calling, Israel was given a choice, and from a sefirotic point of view, there was not a split yet in the Messianic role of Yeshua. A similar call is being offered in Acts 3:19-21. Read the next note for more details on Yohanan's connection with MBY.

3:4 And as to this Yohanan - This Yohanan followed the footsteps of Eliyahu the Prophet:^a the camel's hair with the leather girdle (*2Ki 1:8; Zech 13:4*), and hiding himself in the wilderness (*1Ki 19:4*) by the banks of the Yarden (*2Ki 2:6-13*). Herald and paving the way of the coming of Messiah is in fact a task done by Eliyahu, as it is written "Behold, I send you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of HaShem" (*Mal 3:23 [4:5]*). Eliyahu, according to our tradition, ascended on high alive and turned into an angel (*cf. Khatam Sofer*); it is therefore written: "I will send my angel and he will prepare the way before me" (*Mal 3:1*). "He was taken on high in a storm, with the heavenly troops of fire, written as ready, for the time to cut fury before anger, to restore the fatherly heart upon the sons, and to prepare the tribes of Israel" (*Ben Sirah 48:9-10*). In order to carry the heralding mission, the soul of the [angelical] Eliyahu will be put in another body, which will be like his previous earthly body (*cf. Radak on Mal 3:23*). The word "my angel" (Malakhi מלאכי) equals 101, which is the same value with the full spelling of Eliyahu's name in ordinal numbers: אֱלִיָּהוּ. Going back to our previous mystical connection with Messiah ben Yosef, one of the purposes that Eliyahu haNavi serves is to spiritually give 'life' to the force called Messiah ben Yosef. Eliyahu and Messiah ben Yosef are of the same spiritual soul-root (*Shaar haGilgulim haQadma 32, 34:70b*), and the spiritual life that comes to those who fulfill the role of MBY is directly emanated from Eliyahu's soul. This is the secret in the verse (*Mal 3:24*): "Behold, I send you Eliyahu the Prophet... and he will turn the fatherly heart upon the sons" (*cf. Qol haTor 2:71*). "Fatherly heart upon the sons" לב אבות equals in Gematria: "As a testimony in Yosef" עדות ביהוסף (*Psalms 81:6*).

3:6 and they were immersed by him - this is the act of Jewish Tevilah or immersion. Pharisees and Essenes immersed in a natural body of water to the new converts, and to those who had been defiled. The sages taught that the converts "shall enter the covenant of Judaism only by circumcision, immersion and with a sacrifice [if there's the Temple]" (*Kritot 9a*). Also, "On good days one should be baptized to become pure" (*Sulkhan Arukh 511:3, cf. Beitzah 18*). The Rambam said: "He who directs his heart to purify his soul from spiritual impurities... becomes clean as soon as he determines in his heart to keep apart from these courses, and bathes his soul in the water of pure knowledge" (*Mikvaot 11:12*).

^a *cf. Yosef Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth pp. 243-244.*

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his immersion, he said to them: You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit that accords with repentance. ⁹And do not think you can say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

commentary

3:7 You brood of Vipers - We can notice here that Yohanan sets the tone of what later would be Yeshua's main message. Yohanan is acting as the spiritual force that calls for repentance among the people of Israel. The "brood of vipers" - Yaldei Tzifonim **ילדי צפעונים**, are the small snakes that are actually more poisonous than the adult ones. The prophet Yoel calls the 'Evil Inclination' by the name of Tzifoni (viper), as it's written: "I will remove far off from you the Tzifoni" (*Yoel 2:20*). The root of the word is 'Tzafon' **צפן** which means to be 'hidden in a dark place'. The Talmud says that the 'Viper' (i.e. the Evil Inclination) set his eyes against the first Temple and killed the scholars that were therein, and also set his eyes against the second Temple and slew the scholars that were therein, for the greater the man, the greater his evil inclination (cf. *Sukka 52a*). This is the first time that he hear of Pharisees and Saducees in a negative way (keep in mind they are two totally different sects), and the first thing they are called is 'Brood of vipers'. Why? This is actually a code-name for the Erev Rav (**ערב רב**), because of their poisonous mouth and their 'change of skin'. The Erev Rav are Jewish people who instigate the nation to emulate their behavior (that's why they are called "Rav") and yet their soul didn't convert totally to the ethics and morals of the God of Israel (that's why they are called "erev", which means intermixed). It is therefore written [*Lam 1:5*]: 'their enemies became their head'. The first time we hear of the Erev Rav is when a mixed multitude (Erev Rav) joins the people of Israel (*Ex 12:38*); but as their heart was not turned to God, they caused many problems during the Exodus, for it says: "And the Erev Rav among them fell in a lust, and the sons of Israel also wept on their part" (*Num 11:4*). It's of them that it's written (*Is 1:23*): "Your leaders are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards; they judge not the orphans neither does the cause of the widow reach them" (cf. *Tiqunei Zohar 21*). The Erev Rav caused the loss of the first and second Temple (*Zohar I:26a*). The spiritual force of the Erev Rav works only through deception and roundabout ways and is what separates Messiah ben David from Messiah ben Yosef (*Qol haTor 2:2, b*). The Divrei Hayim says: "Before the arrival of Messiah, most of the Rabbis will be from the Erev Rav, because Israel in themselves are holy, but the Erev Rav only works for their own benefit.... wanting to rule over public.... one should only join with those who truly serve God" (*Divrei Hayim, Vayakheil, 'omissions'*). "The Erev Rav are sons of the Primordial Snake who seduced Eve and [they are] the filth with which he poisoned her.... and they are the seed of Amaleq" (*Zohar I:28b*). "The Erev Rav are like snakes, with all the earth in front of them, as it's written: "and the snake the dust is her bread", but they are not satisfied with the dust so they love bribes, but are not satisfied with all the money of the world" (*Zohar III:124a, Raaya Mehemna*).

3:8 Produce fruit that accords with repentance - Yohanan's reaction towards those Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his immersion is a reaction against their evil hearts. They were Jews, sons of Avraham, and came to the immersion to purify themselves, but all of that was hypocrisy because inside they were not righteous. A ritual immersion without the proper intention of the heart means nothing. Is he attacking every Pharisee and every Sadducee? Certainly not. Sadducees comprised the wealthiest priestly class in Israel and rejected the Oral Torah. Pharisees are those who accepted the Oral Torah; but being a Pharisee didn't necessarily meant to be good, neither to be bad. There were many different political-classes, religious clans and schools of thought among the Pharisees. To claim that all of them were the same would be totally false. In fact, if we read the account in Luke (*Lk 3:7*), Yohanan is talking like this to everyone who comes to be immersed by him, and these words cause them to repent. So this must be viewed as an intra-familial dispute, as if Eliyahu the Prophet had come to his own family and tried to warn them of an imminent Divine judgment over the Holy Land. He is, therefore, causing the heart of the fathers together with the heart of the sons to turn towards God, least God would strike the Land with total destruction (cf. *Radak, Ibn Ezra on Mal 3:24*). The Parents represent the leaders, and the sons are the children of Israel. Or like Rav Kook puts it: the fathers are the conservative stream that holds to the ancient traditions [i.e. Pharisees] and the children are those who promote new ideas and seek to break away with the oral traditions [i.e. Sadducees]. Both of them need to be together and both of them need to live a life in complete repentance.

3:9 out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham - As it is written: "I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh" (*Ez 36:26*); the heart of flesh being the right motivation to follow God. The word 'Even' **אבן** (stone) is a beautiful symmetry that reflects 'Av' **אב** (father) and 'Ben' **בן** (son). The 'Heart of stone' reflects therefore the 'heart of the fathers with the sons' that needs to return to God.

¹¹I immerse you in water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will immerse you in holy spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

¹³Then Yeshua came from Galilee to the Yarden to be immersed by Yohanan.

commentary

3:11 but after me - After Eliyahu, that would be the Messiah. After Yohanan, that is Yeshua.

3:11 whose sandals I am not worthy to carry - It is said in the Hallakha (*Yerushalmi Kiddushin 1:3*) that a heathen slave is acquired by money, deed or 'hazakah' (usucaption). Hazakah is when one acts a slave by tying or loosening his master's sandals, or carrying his master's stuffs - such as the bathing utensils to the bath house. He's saying, I am not worthy to follow him even as a slave.

3:11 immerse you in holy spirit and fire - This concept is introduced in the Gemara (*Sanhedrin 39a*) upon the hypothetical Aggadic idea that God obeys the Torah as well - for example by wearing Tefillin, among many other things. We know it's just metaphorical language, because God is not a physical creature, so be careful not to take these midrashic expositions literally. So, the Gemara asks a question: When God buried Moses (*Deut 34:6*), how did he purify himself from being in contact with a corpse? (cf. *Lev 22:4-6*). Wherein did he bathe? He could not bathe in water because it's written (*Is 40:12*): 'He has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand'. He bathed in fire, as it is written (*Is 66:15*): 'Behold, HaShem will come in fire' [baEish, meaning, inside the fire]. The Rabbi in the Gemara concludes that the Fire - God's holy environment - is the essential element in which purification takes place, as it is written (*Num 31:23*): '[that which can withstand fire shall be passed through fire, and it shall be clean] and whatever cannot withstand fire shall be passed through the water'. This teaches that we ritually immerse our body in water for purification, with repentance in mind, but our soul is only purified when immersed in God's natural environment, the Fire of holiness. This is where every spiritual uncleanness is purged, and a Life in complete submission to God's Torah begins. Immersion comes from the imagery of a baby being born. He's Inside the water of the womb, and when he comes out he begins a new life. So is the ritual immersion when accompanied with Repentance, because "it is as if one created a new rectified reality" (*Zohar III:122b, Naso*). There's a secret here, for the true 'Repentance' only issues in the sefirah of Binah - comprehension (cf. *Zohar I:219a; II:106a-b; III:15b*). By having passion for God one expresses the desire to return and be immersed inside the Divine environment. Only immersed in the 'Supernal Mother' (Binah), one can live in perfect holiness; the secret of being immersed with Ruakh haQodesh **רוח הקודש**; the spirit of Holiness. In the Qumran Scrolls the Ruakh haQodesh is referred to as a spiritual water. "[the holy spirit] just like waters of purification, cleanses man from wickedness" (*Manual of Discipline v. 12-13*). This is relevant because the Qumran community was placed close to the Yarden's mouth, where Yohanan was immersing people, in the wilderness of Judeah, by the Yordan River. When he was arrested they took him to the fortress of Machaerus in Perea, which is about 25km from Qumran (cf. *Josephus, Antiquities 18:5:2*).

3:12 he will clear his threshing-floor - Threshing-floor is interestingly one of the names for the Holy Temple. As it is written: "Ascend, build an altar to HaShem in the threshing-floor of Aravna the Jebusite" (*2Sal 24:18*). The Temple represents the Divine Presence among us, it is the benchmark of every Torah observant Jew. Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes honored the Temple. But not everyone in the Temple was a good Jew, hence the analogy with the wheat and the chaff. Those who are considered the 'chaff' of the threshing-floor are going to experience and suffer God's attribute of Divine wrath, which is called 'unquenchable fire'. 'Unquenchable' because once it starts, there will be no way to stop the judgment (comp. with *Jeremiah 17:27*). It is therefore written: "Behold, my wrath and my fury reaches this place... and it shall burn and not be quenched" (*Jer 7:20*). This is from the same idea mentioned in Malachi: "The day comes that shall burn as a furnace, and all the proud, and all the perpetrators of wickedness will be stubble. And the sun that comes shall burn them so that it will leave them neither root nor branch... but the sun of righteousness will radiate with healing in its wings for you who fear my Name" (*Mal 3:19-20 [4:1-2]*).

alternative readings

3:13 Then Yeshua came from Galilee - In the Gospel according to the Hebrews the details of this account are interestingly different and worth to consider. It says: "When the people had been immersed, Yeshua came also and was immersed by Yohanan. And as he came up out of the water the heavens were opened, and he saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove which descended and entered into him. And a heavenly voice said, You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased, and again, This day have I begotten you. And straightway a great light shone round about the place... Yohanan fell down before him and said, I beg you, master, to immerse me. But he forbade him saying, Let it alone, for thus it is meet that all be fulfilled" (*Gospel according to the Hebrews in Panarion 30:13:7*).

¹⁴But Yohanan tried to deter him, saying, I need to be immersed by you, and do you come to me? ¹⁵Yeshua replied, Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness. Then Yohanan consented.

¹⁶As soon as Yeshua was immersed, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending in the likeness of a dove and it abode upon him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, This is my Son, my beloved, in whom I have delight.

commentary

3:15 Let it be so now - It is not a matter of who is more exalted. Yohanan had the divine mission to immerse others, and as a priest, the mission to create peace (shalom) by sanctifying God's name in Israel and bringing many to repentance, like Pinkhas the priest, who attacked the immoral behavior of the people and made peace between them and God (*Num 25:11-13*). By the way, Pirquei D'Rabbi Eleazar (*ch 47*) says that Pinkhas is Eliyahu. Yeshua, on the other hand, didn't take yet any role that implies superiority over Yohanan's task (notice how it says: 'let it be so NOW'). Right now, he was living as a righteous Jew, studying and observing Torah, and in his attachment to God he knew he had to observe every single command that there was to be observed, so it was proper for him to get immersed.

3:16 Heaven was opened - The things in the spiritual world were perceived through a vision, through an extatic Merkava experience, as it is written: "Heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" (*Ezekiel 1:1*).

3:16 the spirit of God descending in the likeness of a dove - 'Spirit of God' is the term used in Genesis (*1:2*): "And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters"; it was like a wind between the waters below and the waters above, "as a dove that hovers above her brood without touching it" (*Khagiga 15a*). The Midrash calls it "the holy Spirit", **Ruakh Qudsha** (*Midrash Kohen, Beit haMidrash 2:24*), and it is allegorically associated through Remez with the spirit of Redemption (cf. *Bereshit Rabbah 2:5*), because the waters represent repentance, as it is written: "pour out your heart like water" (*Lam 2:19*) and the spirit of God represents the spirit of Messiah, as it is written: "And the spirit of God shall rest upon him" (*Is 11:2*). The coming of king Messiah hovers over repentance. When Rabbi Hiya was about to die and his soul to depart, in a Merkava experience he said: "[I see] heavens open on my eyes... I see descending the mystic heavenly dove. I recognize king Messiah, who I had saw in [another vision] in the school of Rabbi Shimon" (*haqdamat sefer haZohar 4b, tosefta*). The Song of songs (*2:12*) says: "the voice of the dove is heard in our land", and the Targum on Shir haShirim interprets 'dove' as 'holy spirit'.

3:17 and a heavenly voice - The 'voice from heaven', 'qol min-hashmaya' (*Daniel 4:31*) is part of the mystical vision. The Heavenly voice is also called 'reverberation', in Hebrew: Bat-Qol **בת קול** (little voice, lit. daughter of the voice), a voice that is like an echo of God's voice, that resembles many waters, as it is written: "Like the sound of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty" (*Ez 1:24*). It is defined as a voice that is heard behind the back (since you cannot see the one who speaks, and neither know where does it come from) (*Megillah 32a*). It is also defined as a voice that is chirping (*Qohelet Rabbah 7:8*), the chirping being an imagery of wisdom that emanates from the mystic dove - that is, the spirit of God.

3:17 This is my beloved son - Although the Synoptics prefer Isaiah's language, in the Gospel according to the Hebrews the text clearly says that the Spirit of God entered inside Yeshua. This is to say that at that very moment, the mystical Soul of Messiah which transcends everything because is rooted in Atiqat Qadisha (the Holy Ancient of days, which is the upper part in the Sefirah of Keter), this Soul which was prepared since before the creation of the world (*Pesakhim 54a*) entered in Yeshua, that is, because of his righteousness, and at that very moment he began to take the role of Messiah. This is the secret in the verse: "You have loved righteousness and rejected wickedness, therefore God, your God, has anointed you [i.e. has made you Messiah]" (*Psalms 45:8*). "When a Tzaddiq is found on an elevated level in matters of Torah, of commandments and contemplative attachment with God, he is called Son of the Maqom" - Maqom being an euphemism for HaShem (*Elimelech of Lyzinsk, Noam Elimelech 45b*). The Ari explains: "[the man who is meant to be Messiah] will be very righteous, and perform many meritorious deeds, thereby constantly elevating himself. His efforts will ultimately bring him to a very exalted level, at which point he will be able to receive his Yekhida, the Unique Soul that was prepared for him prior to Creation. He will then realize who he is and what his mission will be" (*Arba Meot Shekel Kesef, p. 241; see also Mashiach by Chaim Kramer p. 18*). "**You are my son, this day I have begotten you**" (*Psalms 2:7*) meaning: "in the very day of redemption God will create the Messiah" (*Midrash Tehilim*).