

UNDERSTANDING MOSHIACH

Ein Sof's First Divine Thought and Moshiach's Soul

The Primordial Divine Thought

In the most profound depths of Kabbalistic teaching lies a concept so transcendent it exists at the very boundary of what human language can articulate: Ein Sof's first "Divine Thought" regarding the soul of Moshiach. This represents the initial stirring within the Infinite before any notion of creation came into being. According to the deepest teachings of Chassidut, particularly as elaborated in the works of the Arizal, the Baal Shem Tov, and the Lubavitcher Rebbes, this primordial thought was not merely chronologically first but causally first—the essential purpose that necessitated all of creation. The Zohar (I:15a) hints at this when it states: "With the beginning, the Ein Sof created the King." This enigmatic statement suggests that before the creation of worlds, before the tzimtzum (divine contraction), before even the conceptual framework for creation existed, there was a "thought" of Moshiach—the ultimate "King." This primordial thought can be understood as the divine intention for a being who would embody the perfect unity between Creator and creation—a consciousness capable of containing both infinite divine awareness and finite created existence simultaneously. In the language of the Midrash Tanchuma: "The spirit of Moshiach was that over which God hovered at the beginning of creation." What makes this teaching so profound is that it inverts our conventional understanding of causality. Rather than seeing Moshiach as the culmination of creation's development, Kabbalistic teachings suggest that Moshiach's soul was the very first conceptual entity within divine thought, and creation itself was brought into being as the necessary context for this soul to ultimately manifest. The Alter Rebbe explains in Likkutei Torah that this primordial thought contained within it the entire purpose of creation: the desire for a "dwelling place in the lower worlds." The soul of Moshiach represents the perfect vessel for fulfilling this desire—a being who could reveal the absolute unity between the "lower worlds" and their divine source. This explains a puzzling teaching from the Midrash that lists seven things that preceded creation: Torah, the Throne of Glory, the Patriarchs, Israel, the Temple, repentance, and the name of Moshiach. The name of Moshiach is included because it represents not just a future historical figure but the primordial purpose that necessitated creation itself.

The Unique Structure of Moshiach's Soul

To understand Ein Sof's first thought regarding Moshiach, we must comprehend the unique structure of Moshiach's soul as conceptualized before creation. In Kabbalistic terms, Moshiach's soul was conceived as a perfect integration of opposites: it would contain the highest level of divine revelation (the level of Yechidah within Atik Yomin of Adam Kadmon) while simultaneously possessing the capacity to manifest within the limitations of physical existence (Malchut of Asiyah). The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that unlike other souls, which are "particular" expressions of divine light, Moshiach's soul is a "general" soul—containing within it aspects of all other souls. This is why the redemption he brings is both universal and deeply personal for each individual. This primordial thought envisioned a consciousness that would not merely bridge divine and created reality but would reveal their essential unity. As the Mittlerer Rebbe explains, Moshiach's soul was conceived as the ultimate "transparent vessel"—a consciousness so perfectly aligned with divine will that it would transmit divine light without any distortion while maintaining its distinct identity. In the language of Chabad philosophy, this represents the perfect synthesis of "bitul b'metzius" (complete self-nullification before the divine) and "tenuah atzmi" (authentic self-expression). Most souls experience these as contradictory states—either nullifying themselves before God or expressing their individual essence. Moshiach's soul was conceived as the perfect integration of both simultaneously.

Moshiach's Personal Purpose in the Divine Will

Understanding Ein Sof's first thought regarding Moshiach leads us to comprehend Moshiach's personal purpose within the divine will. This purpose transcends the conventional understanding of Moshiach's historical role as redeemer and teacher. At the most essential level, Moshiach's personal purpose is to serve as the ultimate revelation of divine unity within multiplicity. The Tzemach Tzedek explains that while creation appears to be a movement away from divine unity into multiplicity, Moshiach represents the revelation that this multiplicity itself is an expression of divine unity at a deeper level. This is not merely a philosophical teaching but a lived reality within Moshiach's consciousness. His personal experience of existence is one in which the apparent contradiction between divine infinity and created finitude is completely resolved. As the Rebbe Rashab writes in Hemshech Ayin Beis, Moshiach experiences physical reality itself as a revelation of divine essence, not as something that conceals divinity. From Ein Sof's perspective, Moshiach's purpose is to be the conscious vessel through which the ultimate divine intention for creation—"to have a dwelling place in the lower worlds"—is fully realized. This means that Moshiach's consciousness itself is that "dwelling place"—the first and most perfect example of how created existence can contain divine infinity without contradiction. The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that this is why Moshiach must be a soul clothed in a physical body. If the purpose were merely spiritual revelation, an angelic being would suffice. But Ein Sof's will is specifically for physical reality itself to become a vehicle for divine revelation, and Moshiach embodies this transformation within his very being. This personal purpose manifests in three primary dimensions:

1. **Consciousness:** Moshiach's awareness represents a fundamentally new mode of perception where the divine essence within all reality is directly experienced. As the Alter Rebbe explains in Torah Or, this is not merely intellectual understanding but a transformed state of consciousness where divine unity is as tangibly perceived

as physical objects are in our current state.

2. **Embodiment:** Moshiach's physical existence itself serves as the first complete manifestation of a body that perfectly reveals rather than conceals the divine. The Rebbe Maharash teaches that Moshiach's body becomes the archetype for the transformed state of physicality in the messianic era, where matter itself becomes a perfect expression of divine light.
3. **Relationship:** Perhaps most profoundly, Moshiach's personal purpose includes establishing a new type of relationship between created beings and their Creator. The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that this relationship transcends both the distant awe of "servants to a master" and even the intimate connection of "children to a parent." It establishes a relationship of essential unity while maintaining the delight of relationship itself—what Chassidut calls "yichuda ila'ah" (higher unity) within "yichuda tata'ah" (lower unity).

From Ein Sof's perspective, Moshiach's personal purpose is to be the conscious nexus where the entire circle of creation completes itself—where the divine light that contracted to allow for creation returns to its source, but now enriched by the journey through finitude. As the Maggid of Mezritch taught, this creates a "delight" within Ein Sof that could not exist without the entire process of creation, contraction, and return.

The Paradox at the Heart of Moshiach's Purpose

A profound paradox lies at the heart of Moshiach's personal purpose: he must simultaneously be the highest revelation of divinity and a being who identifies with the limitations and struggles of every created being. The Midrash describes Moshiach as sitting among the poor, binding and unbinding his wounds. This is not incidental to his role but essential to it. His personal purpose includes experiencing the fullness of created existence—including its limitations and suffering—while simultaneously maintaining perfect divine consciousness. This paradox explains why, according to many Kabbalistic sources, Moshiach's soul experiences unique forms of suffering throughout history. The Arizal teaches that aspects of Moshiach's soul have been present in various righteous individuals throughout Jewish history, experiencing the full range of exile and concealment while maintaining their connection to the highest divine light. From Ein Sof's perspective, this paradoxical experience is precisely what allows Moshiach to fulfill his ultimate purpose: to transform the very nature of reality from within, rather than merely imposing divine revelation from above. As the Baal Shem Tov taught, true transformation must come through **התלבשות** (hitlabshut)—full immersion and "clothing oneself" within the reality one seeks to elevate.

The Ultimate Fulfillment

The ultimate fulfillment of Moshiach's personal purpose from Ein Sof's perspective is not merely the historical redemption of humanity or even the revelation of divine wisdom. It is the transformation of existence itself into a perfect expression of its divine source. When this occurs, the circle is complete. Ein Sof's first "thought" regarding Moshiach—the intention for a being who could perfectly embody divine infinity within created finitude—is fully realized. At this point, as the Lubavitcher Rebbe explains, a new dimension of divine revelation becomes possible: the revelation of Ein Sof's essence (atzmut) that transcends even the distinction between infinity and

finitude. This is why Chassidic teachings describe the messianic era as preparing for an even higher state: the World to Come and specifically the resurrection, where physical bodies themselves become perfect vessels for divine essence. Moshiach's personal purpose is to be the pathfinder and first embodiment of this ultimate state of existence. In the most profound sense, Moshiach's personal purpose from Ein Sof's perspective is to be the conscious vessel through which creation recognizes that it was never truly separate from its source—that the entire journey of existence, with all its apparent fragmentation and concealment, was itself an expression of the deepest divine unity. As the Baal Shem Tov taught: "The essence of Moshiach is to reveal how separation itself was always an expression of unity."