

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Messiah and the Jews: Three Thousand Years of Tradition, Belief and Hope

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Introduction

Before you read this book, what did the terms *Messiah* and *redemption* mean to you? How have your perceptions changed?

The book's introduction is a very personal account of waiting for the Messiah. Was there a particular time in your life when you experienced a similar longing for redemption—a sense that “things have to get better than this”?

Had Jews not upheld a belief in the Messiah, what do you think would have happened to Judaism?

Chapter 1

Chapter One explores the idea that we can hasten the coming of the Messiah by “hearken[ing] to God's voice,” or postpone redemption by refusing to learn humility and discipline. What is your reaction to these teachings?

Chapter 2

Chapter two discusses the role that the Land of Israel plays in Jewish messianic belief. Why do you think the Land of Israel was so central in this belief before 1948?

With the establishment of the State of Israel, how has the role of Israel changed?

Chapter 3

Jewish apocalyptic literature is filled with bloody and violent images of messianic wars and warriors. How does encountering this type of literature make you feel?

Why do you think some of our ancestors embraced this literature? Why do you think some of our ancestors shunned it?

Chapter 4

Chapter four shares the conviction that our world will be vastly different after the Messiah comes. Some of the teachings—that women will bear six hundred thousand children, that people will stand one hundred cubits high, that the dead will be physically resurrected—are especially challenging. With our rational, scientific worldviews, how can we find meaning and significance in such traditions? Must we take these traditions literally? Do you think our ancestors did?

Chapter 5

Chapter five explains that familiar Jewish elements such as Elijah, the shofar, and Rosh Hashanah have messianic implications. How does learning about their messianic aspects affect and enhance your understanding of these figures?

Chapter 6

Chapter six poses the possibility that “the Messiah is us.” What do you feel is the role of humanity in bringing the Messiah?

What is your personal role in hastening redemption?