

Research Paper

A Giant of a Man. Sir Moses Montefiore as seen by his many hundreds of petitioners from the Holy Land.

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As is well-documented, Sir Moses and Judith Lady Montefiore visited The Holy Land on several occasions, engaging in a long love-affair with the country and its people.¹ During their visits in 1839 and 1849, Montefiore and Judith received over 1200 letters, mostly requesting aid from Jewish residents of Safed, Tiberias, Jerusalem, Damascus, Sidon, Tyre, Acre, Hebron, Beirut, Alexandria, Djermeq, Iaroon and Kasmia. He also received letters from Jews in towns and villages in Europe, as well as from Christians and Muslims. These letters are now housed in the Montefiore Endowment's Library in London. They are the survivors of the bonfire of Montefiore's papers in which, at his behest, the bulk was destroyed after his death by his nephew, Joseph Sebag-Montefiore. The comparatively few salvaged documents include this archive of letters that offers us a glimpse into the lives and minds of their nineteenth century authors and, more specifically, an insight into their attitude to Sir Moses.

The archive comprises only correspondence addressed to the Montefiores but valuable information can be garnered from it about Sir Moses' status in the eyes of the petitioners. Not only does its content often refer to his actions and influence, and its language reflects their expectation of Sir Moses, but the manner of address is varied and revealing. The forms of address used suggest huge respect and admiration on the part of the writers who imbued Montefiore with a wide range of positive traits. They saw him as an iconic man on various levels; a man with significant political sway within both the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds; a father figure; a religiously learned Jew; a man connected to Jerusalem and the rest of the country in which Judaism, tradition and historical yearning and entitlement are inextricably linked. Arguably, the writers' approach to Montefiore even sometimes strayed beyond the physical world.

The letters are written in various languages but mostly in Hebrew (with Aramaic content) in a broad range of cursive, Sephardi and Maghrebi scripts, in numerous different hands. Others are in Arabic and various European languages, including classical German. From this we gather that the writers assumed that Montefiore was an educated, learned polyglot, able to read and understand this vast range of correspondence. The language used employs a high content of Biblical and Talmudic Hebrew, relevant and pertinent to the particular points the writers wished to make. The writers assumed that Montefiore possessed deep religious knowledge.

The overarching impression of him conveyed by the letters is of a man who is larger than life, a giant (at 6'3" Montefiore was uncommonly tall) both physically and figuratively, a figure of enduring presence and power. One letter addresses him as גדול האדם בענקים *he'adam gadol be'anakim* (the

¹ During these visits he conducted several censuses of the Jewish population of the Holy Land.

man who is great among giants).² Menachem Mendel, originally from Wilkomir near Vilna, included a pictorial representation of this metaphor in his French and Hebrew letter: he depicted Montefiore standing with a telescope on the Mount of Olives, towering high above the buildings of Jerusalem and surveying the land proprietorially.³ Another letter supports this suggestion of ownership of the land, beginning with the words *למי כל חמדת ישראל*, *Lemi kol ħemdat Yisrael* (Who owns all that is beautiful in Israel?),⁴ words spoken by Samuel to Saul implying the latter's ownership. Mendel's letter asserts that Gentiles revere Montefiore, that he is *Gaon Yisrael*, that he demands only good for his people, surprisingly proclaiming *ינון שמו* *Yinon shemo* (May his name shine out). *Yinon* is a name of the Jewish Messiah.⁵

Letters to Montefiore show that the Jewish writers believed that he possessed the power, the judgment, the reputation and the will to influence kings and other leaders the world over. A letter from leaders of the congregations of Safed, including notably Moshe David Ashkenazi and Shmuel Heller is typical of many others in its initial address, saying *הנדיב המפורסם בכל קצוי ארץ וים חוקים*, *Hanadiv hamefursam bekol ħitsvei arets veyam reħukim* (The philanthropist, well-known in all the far corners of the land and sea).⁶ Jews, assuming that he was their representative and advocate, wrote to him asking him to intervene in disputes and sometimes desperate situations between the Jewish community and the Christians and Muslims with whom they had to cooperate, or to whom they were subordinate.

The context in which the letters are written is highly relevant to their content. They must be read in their historical perspective and not merely as letters of admiration requesting financial assistance. The Jews of the Holy Land under Ottoman rule, were naturally subject to the decrees and judgments of local and Imperial Muslim courts. Furthermore they were vulnerable to the efforts of evangelical Christians to convert them to Christianity. These two themes are raised over and over again in the letters; and the resulting misery and hardship described brings to life the plight of the Jew both as *dhimmi* in a Muslim land and as a target for zealous Christian proselytisers. Appeals to Montefiore in the letters show that the Jews relied on his influence with local and national leaders including the local Muslim pashas and beys, European Consuls in The Holy Land and leaders of various countries such as the Austrian Emperor, the Russian Tsar, Ibrahim Pasha and Mehmet Ali of Egypt and the Ottoman Sultan.⁷

An underlying assumption running through the letters, and plainly, the reason for them, is that Montefiore was seen as a benefactor. He is addressed as *עוזר דלים* *ozar dalim*, (helper of the oppressed),⁸ and, *נדיב*, *nadiv* (generous).⁹ These qualities are the basis of the writers' initial approach to Montefiore as people mostly wrote begging for help, financial or otherwise, or to thank him for assistance already given. Philanthropy and caring for the unfortunate in society are the acts of a religious, observant Jew; and the letters are peppered with religious sayings to support this view of him. Furthermore, most letters heap blessings on Montefiore, as well as Judith, using phrases and

² Core Collection, Montefiore Endowment Library H576, letter 119

³ Core, H577, letter 141

⁴ Samuel 1 9:20 where Samuel goes on to say that the land belongs to Saul and his household.

⁵ Psalm 72:17 in discussion with Asi Mittelman, graduate of the Judith Montefiore Seminary College of the Montefiore Endowment.

⁶ Core, H587, letter 84

⁷ Ibid, H577, letter 197 (Russia, Damascus), H576, letter 167 (Russian edicts), H576b, letter 30 (diplomatic entanglement involving Russian, Prussian, Turkish, Jewish and English authorities, H576, letter 166 (Ibrahim Pasha's army).

⁸ Ibid, H576b, letter 32

⁹ Ibid, H576, letter 121

expressions that show a very intimate and detailed knowledge of the *Tanakh*, *Talmud* and other scholarly tracts. The writers clearly expected Montefiore to understand those references.

Further proof that the letter writers saw Montefiore as a religious Jew is that they attempted to persuade him to help by appealing to his religious conscience with the inducement that by doing so he would be fulfilling the responsibility of a Jew to do a *mitzvah*, a good deed, as required according to the *Torah*, by an observant Jew. As such he is addressed as חונן דלים *honen dalim* (helper of the oppressed)¹⁰ and רודף צדקה *rodef tsedaka* (champion of charity).¹¹

Writers said that God would heap on Montefiore the blessings of a long life, many children, prosperity and happiness, if Montefiore performed specific *mitzvot*, such as charity. Some examples are:

- Razel Leah, a poor widow asked Montefiore to do the *mitzvah* of paying for her son's wedding;¹²
- Noah Mizrahi said that a thief broke into his house at night and stole the money he had saved for his wedding, totalling 900 Grush. Montefiore could fulfil two *mitzvot* if he would pay for the wedding, that of charity as well as (indirectly through the newly-married groom) the *mitzvah* of 'being fruitful and multiplying';¹³
- Miriam, daughter of Raḥel and Rabbi of Raaman, wrote to say that her husband was in jail, unable to pay debts to gentiles incurred by his late father. Some good people were trying to help him by buying his property valued at 14000 Grush, leaving him in 1600 Grush debt. Montefiore would be fulfilling the very important *mitzvah* of פדיון שבויים *pidyon shevuim* (redemption of captives) if he would give Miriam's family the money;¹⁴
- Kilah Raḥel from Kamenitz wrote to Judith asking her to do the *mitzvah* of sending money to poor children, possibly her own;¹⁵
- Leaders of the Russian congregation of Tiberias begged to borrow money from Montefiore, to help the entire community (promising to pay him back using funds from the Amsterdam community), citing the *mitzvah*, הצלת נפשות רבות *hatsalat nefashot rabot* (saving many souls);¹⁶
- Another letter concerns the funding of the *hevre lina* (the charity for offering practical and spiritual help to the poor and sick). The writers did not have sufficient funds to sustain this service on a daily basis, and were reluctant to take money belonging to the charity for helping the sick and providing bridal dowries. The work of both these organisations, צדקה, *tsedakah*, constitutes the fulfilling of *mitzvot*, and the writers applied to Montefiore on this basis.¹⁷

The attributes with which the Jews of The Holy Land endowed Montefiore permit, demand and explain his involvement in their lives. His fame, standing and generosity meant that Jews regularly wrote to ask him to intervene in the community's internal disputes.

The manner of requesting help, and the kind of help requested, was often a demonstration of the piety of the petitioners, possibly in the belief that Montefiore, himself a pious man, would be

¹⁰ *Ibid*, H575, 54a

¹¹ *Ibid*, H576, letter 100

¹² *Ibid*, H576, letter 189

¹³ *Ibid*, H576, letter 191

¹⁴ *Ibid*, H576, letter 154, H587, letter 86/265

¹⁵ *Ibid*, H576, letter 163

¹⁶ *Ibid*, H576, letter 207

¹⁷ *Ibid*, H576b, letter 13

encouraged to respond well. An example is a common motif in the letters, that of the assertion by writers that they had acquired 4 cubits of land, קנין ארבע אמות קרקר *kinyan arba amot karkar* in The Holy Land.¹⁸ At first reading one may take this at face value in that individuals had bought land to inhabit or to farm. However 4 cubits is a distance of about 8ft, insufficient for either of these purposes. So, what does it mean? The *Talmud* says that a Jew who walks this distance in one stride in The Holy Land is fulfilling a *mitsvah* and is therefore assured of a place in the world to come *העולם הבא* *ha'olam haba*. Everywhere in The Land of Israel is holy by definition, so a person gains spiritual credence by attempting to do so. It is impossible to do it in one stride so walking it in two paces is literally a step towards performing the *mitsvah*.¹⁹

Further evidence showing the Jewish writers' approach to Montefiore as a religious man is contained in letters concerning the writing of a *sefer torah* (the Holy Book of the Law) for him. For example, Yitzhak Sofer wrote letters in 1839 and 1849 about *sifre torah* commissioned by Montefiore.²⁰ Moshe Yehoshia of Baad and Zelig of Ariyuv sent a second letter asking for payment for a *sefer torah* which they had written for Montefiore, on the request of Rabbi Avraham Dov of Avartich and Rabbi Shmuel Heller.²¹

Letters about religious institutions such as the community *Talmud Torah* school, the *bet midrash*, *mikveh* or synagogue also suggest that the writers thought that Montefiore would respond positively to their requests on such matters. Examples include the *Kadosh* congregation of Jerusalem asking for 50,000 piastres to build a *Talmud Torah* building on the sacred site of Ezekiel's *mercava* and Elijah's cave;²² and a request for money for the rebuilding of the *Bet Nasi Bet Midrash* in Acre.²³

The religious theme is often highlighted in the typical use of a chronogram. That is the creative construction of the number of the appropriate year using consonants whose numerical value when totalled equals that of that year (gematria), the resulting expression which complements the message contained in the letter. Phrases used demonstrate a prolific use of expressions quoted from the *Tanakh* and well-known prayers and religious tracts. For example, a letter from 70 members of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jerusalem congregations begs for help. People had been forced on to the streets because of onerous rent demanded by Gentile landlords. In the hope of obtaining Montefiore's help, they constructed the year using the phrase from Psalm 33:5 אוהב צדקה ומשפט *ohev tsedakah vemishpat hesed hashem mala ha'arets* (lover of Zion and justice, the land is filled with God's loving-kindness).²⁴ It seems that the hope was that Montefiore, known for his charitable deeds, would be persuaded to help them as a result of this rather unsubtle hint. In addition, highlighted in huge letters is קתל מערבי *Kotel Ma'aravi* (the Western Wall of the destroyed Jewish Temple), possibly representing the essence of Jewish observance and surely included as a further inducement for Montefiore to help.

The prolific use of gematria, punning and other plays on words, shows that the writers saw Montefiore as a learned scholar. Indeed he is addressed as, אורן של חכמים *oran shel hakhamim*.²⁵ This means that it is a good thing to seek and enjoy the closeness of rabbis: just as one enjoys the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, H576, letter 201

¹⁹ Schapira, Rabbi Nathan, trans. and comm. Slavin, David. Footsteps in the Land, Chap. 11 from http://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380833/jewish/Israel-A-Step-Up-112.htm quoting from Babylonian Talmud Ketuvot 111a and Maharal Chidushei Aggaddot 1:168. 4 cubits is a very specific and meaningful distance in Kabbalah; the above link expands on the theme.

²⁰ *Core*, H575, letter 64b, H576, letter 104

²¹ *Ibid.*, H576, letter 165

²² *Ibid.*, H577, letter 145

²³ *Ibid.*, H577, letter 253

²⁴ *Ibid.*, H576b, letter 11. Quotes Psalms 33:5

²⁵ Mishnah Avot 2, 10. As explained by Asi Mittelman.

warmth of a fire in the home, so one benefits also from the teachings of learned rabbis. The meaning of תורה *Torah* can also be 'fire' and one should warm oneself with it, in study. Some letters are very creative, lines of poetry are included in praise of Montefiore, using phrases from religious texts such as Psalms and Proverbs, and often annotated with highlighted letters or words that spell out a message separate from the flow of the text. For example, Montefiore's and Judith's names are often made to stand out from a text. A particularly original and imaginative example, creating a pun to form Montefiore's name, is משה מן טוב פארה *Moshe min tov fara*.²⁶ This means, Moses, of goodness and magnificence.²⁷ The writers also created puns, mnemonics and acrostics to spell out particular messages of thanks and praise to Montefiore. משה חזק *Moshe hazak* (Moses is strong) is an example of an acrostic formed vertically by the initial letters of each line of a poem of praise.²⁸ Another feature is the prolific use of abbreviations in letters, some of which, with their many possible interpretations, can befuddle modern readers. From the numerous examples of punning, רום כתר *rom keter* is an abbreviation meaning, on the face of it 'On high, Crown', while the individual letters comprise the phrase, רום מעלתו כבוד תורתו *rom ma'alato kavod torato* (His highness, His honour), terminology reserved for rabbis, and a particular compliment to Montefiore.²⁹

It appears that the chronogram of a particular year was selected carefully for maximum effect, reflecting the contents and purpose of the letter in which it was to be used. An example is the year 5594 (1834) which in some letters is represented as, שנת נשברי לב *shnat nishberai lev* (the year of the broken-hearted),³⁰ the year of a month long שלל *shalal* (attack or pogrom) of rape, murder, torture, religious persecution and plunder on the residents of Safed by local Arabs. Safed's Jews suffered two further catastrophes in quick succession such that by the time Montefiore arrived in 1839, letters using the chronogram spelling, 'broken-hearted', would have been particularly poignant and meaningful to their authors. After the 1834 *shalal* the city was hit by רעש *ra'ash* (an earthquake) in 1837 and a second *shalal* in 1838, leaving Jewish survivors in abject conditions of bereavement, poverty, homelessness, vulnerability and disease. The three events are referred to collectively by the acronym שרש *sharash*, standing for שלל רעש שלל *shalal ra'ash shalal* (pogrom, earthquake, pogrom) in several of the letters. A well-versed scholar would know that 'The broken-hearted' are mentioned in the Psalms with particular reference to the fact that God protects and heals them וישוע קרוב יהוה לנשברי לב ואת דכאי רוח יושיע *karov Adonai lenishberai lev ve'et dakhai ruah yoshia* (The lord is close to the broken-hearted, and saves those of crushed spirit).³¹ The clear message conveyed in letters written in that period is that God would act through Montefiore to protect the oppressed and poor, in both an emotional and a religious appeal.

The use of literary devices indicates that letter writers saw Montefiore as an educated, cultured man who could well understand the subtle nuances and sophistication of creative writing in a religious-Jewish context.

Montefiore's position as a man of standing is another feature of the letters, with the use of numerous and varied flattering titles. The following is only a selection of the vast range of such addresses:

ראשון לנשיאים *rishon lenesi'im* – first among princes.³²

כבוד מורנו הרב רבי (כמהרר) *kavod morenu harav rabbi....* - His honour our great teacher rabbi.³³

²⁶ Core, H587, letter 111

²⁷ Alcalay, Reuben. *The Complete Hebrew-English Dictionary*. (Jerusalem, 1963), p1995

²⁸ *Ibid*, H587, letter 91/260_Sadagora, not Israel

²⁹ *Ibid*, H587, letter 95

³⁰ *Ibid*, H575, letter 45b

³¹ *Psalms 34:19*

³² *Ibid*

³³ This common expression of respect is used prolifically throughout the collection.

ספיר ויהלום *sapir veyahalom* - sapphire and diamond.³⁴
 אהובי אדוני *ahuvi adoni* - my beloved lord.³⁵
 הגביר המפורסם *hagvir hamefursam* - the eminent master/lord/gentleman.³⁶
 הרב המופלג *harav hamuflag* – the eminent rav.³⁷
 מרביץ תורה *marbits torah* – studies Torah.³⁸

Letter writers also used other forms of address that imbued Montefiore with varying degrees of greatness associated incrementally with the very essence of Judaism, its tradition, its history, and religious learning. In numerous letters, Montefiore is glorified as leader or prince of the Jews as follows:

נשיא ישראל *nasi Yisrael* - king/prince, head of the Sanhedrin – like Judah the Nasi/Patriarch.³⁹
 נשיא ארץ הקדושה *nasi erets haqedusha*.⁴⁰
 ראש לבית אבות *rosh levet avot* – head of an individual tribe.⁴¹
 ראש שבטי ישראל *rosh shivtei Yisrael* - head of all the tribes of Israel.⁴²
 ראש גולת אריאל *rosh golat ariel* – head of the Diaspora, term given to the Lion of Judah, Rabbi Judah Messer Leon, 15th century Italian rabbi.⁴³
 These terms describe Montefiore as head of the tribes of Judah both within Israel and beyond in the Diaspora, evoking both Biblical and post-Biblical Jewish history.
 נשיא ארבעה ארצות החיים *nasi arba'ah aratsot hehaim* – head of the 4 lands, Russia, Lithuania, Poland and Israel. This means the Diaspora.⁴⁴
 נשיא הארץ *nasi ha'arets*- prince of Israel.⁴⁵
 ראש הממשלה הראשונה ממנו *rosh hamemshala harishona mimenu* - our first prime minister.⁴⁶
 השר הגדול *hasar hagadol* – the great general. *sar vegadol laYehudim* – great leader of the Jews.⁴⁷ It describes in the Talmud Saul's great military general, Avner, after his death.
 שר צבא ישראל *sar tseva Yisrael* – the general of the host of Israel, also suggesting military prowess and leadership.⁴⁸
 ראש אלפי ישראל *rosh alphai Yisrael* – head of the multitudes of Israel.⁴⁹

Though a member of the Surrey Militia in his youth, Montefiore was never a renowned soldier. So what is the reason for emphasising his military prowess in some letters? As we shall see, there is an argument supporting the letter writers' view of Montefiore as a king, and even a Jewish Messiah.⁵⁰ However, in order to qualify for this role Montefiore must fill certain criteria, including being a man of military might.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, H575, letter 110d

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, H576 24 from Yosef Farhi, whose parents are dead, asking for help as he has nowhere else to turn.

³⁷ *Core*, H576, letter 168

³⁸ *Ibid.*, H577, letter 235

³⁹ *Ibid.*, H577, letter 189

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, H576b, letter 5

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, H587, letter 85

⁴² *Ibid.*, H576b, letter 11

⁴³ *Ibid.*, H576, letter 64

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, H587, letter 69

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, H576b, letter 128

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, H587, letter 82/269

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, H587, letter 87/264

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, H576, letter 247

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, H577, letter 276

⁵⁰ See Appendix

Not content with attributing these positions of privilege and power to Montefiore, some writers went further by giving Montefiore regal status with the title of king of the Jews and Israel, again connecting him to all of Jewish history:

מלך ישראל *melekh Yisrael* - king of Israel. This is usually attributed to King David.⁵¹

מלכא ומלכתא ישראל *malkha vemalkhata Yisrael* – the king and queen of Israel, referring to Montefiore and Judith.⁵²

המלך והמלכה אדוני המלך *adoni hamelekh* - my lord king, and Judith his queen: *hamelekh ve hamalka*.⁵³

הגדול אשר ברמה *ha'eshel hagadol asher beramah* - (eshel is Aramaic) the great eminent man.⁵⁴ From Samuel 1 22:6 where Saul is described as sitting in Gibeah by the great tamarisk tree on the hill. Rashi interprets this to mean that Saul is king thanks to Samuel, the great tamarisk who was in Ramah praying for him.⁵⁵

The regal position of the Montefiores is constantly reiterated, with reference to wearing crowns and sitting on thrones:

וכתר מלכות על ראשו *veketer malkhut al rosho* – the crown of royalty is on his head.⁵⁶

ויאריכו ימים על ממלכתם *veya'arikhu yamim al mamlakhtam* – may He (God) lengthen the days of their kingdom.⁵⁷

כסא מלכותו *kise malkhuto* – the throne of his kingdom.⁵⁸

ויתנשא כסאו מעל כל *veyitnase kisao me'al kol* – May his throne be raised up above all others.⁵⁹

The last expression raises Montefiore to an even grander level, from being an earthly king to one placed above the rest, from wearing a crown to becoming the crown himself, an abstract, beyond mortal, concept of glory, conjuring an image of Montefiore as an enormous, ethereal, glittering force:

נזר ישראל *nezer Yisrael* - crown of Israel.⁶⁰

נזר ראשינו *ateret roshenu* - crown of our heads.⁶¹ Also *nezer rosheinu*.⁶²

וצניף תפארתנו *ve-tsnif tifartenu* – our crowning glory.⁶³

נזר ועטרה *nezer ve'atarah*.⁶⁴

Ambiguously, Montefiore was described as either, 'king of the world,' or 'king forever,' in the Aramaic phrase, מלכא לעלמין *malka le'alamin*. Either way, this strays beyond the realms of reality. Now in an arcane environment, Montefiore can be addressed in Biblical terms, some that are shocking and even blasphemous to modern religious Jews. He is addressed in some letters with superlatives usually reserved only for angels and other representatives of God, and also, astonishingly, as God. As a representative of God the writers created a bridge between the human and immortal worlds where Montefiore was the link between the two, a position of privilege, influence and status, way beyond reality. Important examples of these titles include:

⁵¹ *Ibid.* H576, letter 220

⁵² *Ibid.* H577, letter 235

⁵³ *Ibid.* H576, letter 223

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* H576, letter 214

⁵⁵ http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15851#showrashi=true

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* H576, letter 209

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* H577, letter 146

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* H576, letter 216

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* H575, letter 27

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* H577, letter 201

⁶¹ *Ibid.* H576, letter 61

⁶² *Ibid.* H587, letter 78

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* H577, letter 276

נשיא אלקים *nasi elokim* - Prince of God, a title with which Abraham, the Patriarch, is honoured in parashat Haye Sarah.⁶⁵ An alternative version is the use of נשיא אלדים *nasi elodim*.⁶⁶ *Elodim*, rhyming, presumably deliberately with *Elodim*, is an acronym meaning, אין לו דמות, *ein lo d'mut* 'he (who) has no image,' as applied to God.

בו אשר רוח אלהים *ish asher ruah Elohim bo* – a man in whom God's spirit lives.

נזר אלדיו על ראשו *nezer elodav al rosho* – the crown of God is on his head.⁶⁷ So, more than a mortal king, Montefiore here is transformed into a royal figure selected by God.

ה' עבד *eved hashem* – servant of God.⁶⁸ Terminology reserved for only Moses and Joshua such important figures in Jewish tradition.

המלאך הגואל *hamalakh hago'el* – the redeeming angel. This is a direct reflection of the writers' gratitude to Montefiore for the many acts of salvation to the communities around the world.

רוח אפינו משיח *ruah apeinu moshiah hashem* – the breath of our nostrils the anointed of God, sometimes appearing as simply, 'anointed of God'.⁶⁹ This, also translating as 'Messiah' is very revealing. Some of the other titles given to Montefiore in the letters are descriptions of attributes that the Jewish Messiah must possess. *Ruah apeinu* evokes the great King Josiah,⁷⁰ who is described thus in Chronicles and who is considered to be almost as saintly as Moses.⁷¹

Other descriptions of Montefiore seem to compare him, remarkably, with God:

המאיר לארץ ולדרי *Hameir la'arets uledaareha* – He who gives light to the earth and to its inhabitants, a reference to God from *Shaharit* service.⁷² Leaders of the Hassidic congregation of Tiberias specifically compare 'Moshe' to God, writing, פני משה כפני חמה המאיר לארץ, *Pnei Moshe kepnei hama hameir la'arets* – the face of Moses is like the face of the sun, he who gives light to the earth.⁷³

רועה ישראל *Roeh Yisrael* - shepherd of Israel, leading the flock. Term reserved for God.⁷⁴

רועה צאן קדושים *roeh tson kedoshim* – shepherd of the holy flock.⁷⁵

הרופא לשבורי לב ומחבש לעצבותם *harofeh lesheburei lev umehabes le'atsbotam* (God) healer of the broken-hearted and binder of their wounds. Psalm 147:3 recited in daily *Shaharit* prayers.⁷⁶

סומך נופלים *somekh noflim* – supporter of the falling, from the daily *Amidah* service.

אדון המושיע *adon hamoshia* Lord Saviour.⁷⁷ This term is used to address God in prayer during the festival of Sukkot.

It is surprising to find expressions such as these equating a man with God, thus making the writers' attitude to Montefiore beyond the normal respect and reverence associated with a person of standing, power and learning. The sheer number of such letters supports the view that Montefiore was seen as unique, an unrivalled icon to the Jews during that era; a figure whose actions and power fill a need that no other can approach. At any time in Jewish history there is the potential for a person to be the anointed of God, the Messiah, provided he fulfils the criteria as set out in Psalm

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, H576, letter 100

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, H587, letter 85/266

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, H576, letter 172

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, H576, letter 63

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, H577, letter 154, from Lamentations 4:20

⁷⁰ Rashi refers to the description of King Josiah in these terms in II Chronicles 35:25

⁷¹ Lamentations 4:20.

⁷² *Ibid*, H575, letter 27, H577, letter 213

⁷³ *Ibid*, H574, letter 42. The reference to the sun is evocative of Moses, who is described thus in the *Talmud*, and so makes a comparison between him and Montefiore.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, H576, letter 246

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, H576, letter 208

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, H577, letter 212

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, H576b, letter 18

72⁷⁸ and Ezekiel 37 24:28.⁷⁹ The suggestion of military prowess in Montefiore in some letters may be a conscious effort to show that he personifies every attribute required by a serious contender for the role of Messiah in the 19th century, since he appears to exemplify all the other necessary traits.

Letters show that it is extremely convenient that Montefiore was named Moshe, a happy coincidence allowing his admirers to use titles and phrases that appear to equate him, in status and quality, with the two icons of Jewish history also named Moses.

It appears that Montefiore was compared to the Rambam, Moses Maimonides, the great rabbi, scholar and doctor of mediaeval Spain and Egypt. The well-known sentence, *ממשה ועד משה אין כמו* *MiMoshe ve'ad Moshe ein kemo Moshe Tiferet Yisrael* (From Moses and until Moses there was no one like Moses, glory of Israel) was said of Maimonides, the expounder of the *Torah*, and referring back to Moses deliverer of the *Torah*. As written in a letter to Montefiore, one can only assume that the phrase is being used to equate him with these other two great men named Moshe, a compliment indeed. One example is the letter addressing Montefiore as:

הנשר הגדול בעל כנפיים *hanesher hagadol baal knafayim* (the great eagle with wings). Maimonides is widely known as the *נשר* *hanesher*, and this adjective also describes great scholars in general. The analogy continues when letter writers expressed the hope that Montefiore would protect them with the shade provided by his wings,⁸⁰ surely echoing the phrase, while quoting from Psalm 63:8, *ובצל כנפך ארנן* *ubetsel kanfekha aranen* (under your wings I will rejoice) praising and thanking God under whose wings the author of the Psalm shelters. This analogy is exemplified in the writing of year 5609 in some letters, where this phrase is cleverly combined with *יש לנו דורש ושואל* *yesh lanu doresh vesho'el* (We have an advocate, one who cares for us) to construct the numerical value of the year using gematria.⁸¹ The phrase is a reference to a statement in Ezekiel *אין דורש ואין מבקש* *ein doresh ve'ain mevakesh* (We have no one to care for us the people).⁸² The contrasting positive assertion in letters to Montefiore that the Jews do have an advocate brings to the mind of an educated, scholarly Jew the relevant section of the *Mishnah*, and suggests that the letter writer felt, contrary to the message of desolation in Ezekiel, that the Jews did have someone, in Montefiore, to protect them and on whom they could lean. Furthermore, although the Psalm is written in praise of God, the use of *נשר ישראל* *Nesher Yisrael* to address Montefiore combined with the representation of the Jewish year expressing the concept of sheltering under wings, signifies the comparison of Montefiore with an eagle. This must have been intended as a great compliment to Montefiore; he was integral to the Jewish people, a scholar and man of piety, and perhaps more importantly, their protector, advocate and leader.

Probably more significantly, some writers compared Montefiore to Moshe Rabbeinu, to Moses on the mountain, in other words, to the law-giver on Mount Sinai and the saviour of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.⁸³ This comparison is another huge, though irresistible compliment (given the name), to Montefiore, and is ubiquitous throughout the letters. Again, drawing on scenes and phrases from Jewish texts, he is *רועה נאמן* *Roe' Ne'eman* (faithful shepherd),⁸⁴ and in Aramaic translation in the Kabbalah, *רעיה מהימנא* *Re'ayah Meheimena* (faithful shepherd), also the name of a section of the Zohar.⁸⁵ As *גואלינו משה* *Go'alenu Moshe*, (our saviour Moshe), the writers compared him with Moshe Rabbeinu redeemer of the Israelites from slavery.⁸⁶

⁷⁸ See appendix for the text of Psalm 72

⁷⁹ See appendix for this section of Ezekiel

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, H576, letter 216

⁸¹ *Ibid*, H576, letter 223

⁸² Ezekiel 34:6 at http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16132#showrashi=true

⁸³ *Ibid*, H576b, letter 19

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, H576, letter 24

⁸⁵ Alcalay 2472, *Core*, H576b, letter 131 and H577, letter 168

⁸⁶ *Core*, H575, letter 54a

יִסְמַח מֹשֶׁה בִּמְתַנַּת חֲלָקוֹ עֶבֶד נֶאֱמָן קִרְאָת לּוֹ *yismach Moshe bematnat helko eved ne'eman karata lo*, refers to Moshe Rabbeinu in the *Shaharit* service.⁸⁷

פְּנֵי מֹשֶׁה כְּפְנֵי חֲמָה *pnei Moshe kepnei hama*, (the face of Moses is like the face of the sun) is from the *Talmud*. It is said of Moses just hours before his death, the great leader who had, significantly at that moment, just brought the Jews to the border of the Promised Land. Like Moses the redeemer, Montefiore was seen by the letter writers, in so many instances, as their ticket to liberation from various forms of oppression.

A letter refers to *Torat Moshe*, highlighted repeatedly in a song of praise to Montefiore,⁸⁸ while another calls Montefiore, *Eved Hashem* (servant of the Lord). Today this is shockingly blasphemous to a religious Jew.⁸⁹ In some letters the following phrase is used, *מי לנו גדול ממשה?* *mi lanu gadol miMoshe?* (*Sotah* 1:9), (Who have we greater than Moshe?)⁹⁰ On the surface this is simply a flattering rhetorical question, but to a Talmudist it evokes a phrase preceding a confirmation that Moshe was unique and special to God. Moses had the responsibility and the honour of taking Joseph's bones back to The Holy Land, from Egypt at the time of the Exodus,⁹¹ for burial in Shekhem. This is significant because Moshe told the Israelites that after entering the country they must build an altar of Sacrifice to God in Shekhem, and write the Mosaic Law and God's covenant with the people on the stones of the altar.⁹² In the *Sotah* rabbis assert that only Moshe could assume the task of carrying Joseph's bones because of his position as the leader of the Israelites and the man closest to God. So the use of this expression is highly significant, another suggestion of a comparison between Moshe, leader of the Jews and favourite of God, and Montefiore. It brings to mind the concept of Moses' pivotal role in fulfilling the Jewish nationalistic dream of the return to the Jewish homeland, and, by association, imbued Montefiore with the power, will and stature to further the same goal.⁹³

The connection to Moshe Rabbeinu is emphasised further in the references to the 'children of Israel,' in numerous letters, notably again, in the representation of year 5609, which quotes *מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* *Moshe uvnei Yisrael* (Moses and the children of Israel).⁹⁴ Given the adoring treatment of Montefiore as the latter day saviour of Jews, this phrase was surely used deliberately to spell out the connection between him, the Jews of the 19th century, and the Biblical epic. The writers of these letters gave Montefiore the status of the outstanding leader of the Jews in the *Tanakh*. Not only a pious observant Jew, he was their salvation from all their woes, and, like Moshe Rabbeinu, gave them hope for a good life in the land promised to them by God.

Thus by equating Montefiore with Moses, the man who brought the Israelites, the chosen people, to the promised land, it follows that letter writers saw him as having enormous influential power concerning The Holy Land, combined with a great love for the country. This is reflected in the nationalistic titles they used, including some of those noted above:

מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל *Melekh Yisrael*, King of Israel.⁹⁵

נָשִׂיא יִשְׂרָאֵל *Nasi Yisrael*, Prince/President of Israel.⁹⁶

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, H577, letter 249, using Moshe Teitelbaum's *Yismach Moshe* to thank Montefiore. H576, letter 6

⁸⁸ *Core*, H576b, letter 22

⁸⁹ In conversation with Asi Mittelman, who was astonished at its use.

⁹⁰ *Core*, H575, letters 56e and f

⁹¹ Exodus 13:19 in Rev Dr A Cohen, ed., *The Soncino Chumash: With Introductions and Commentary*. (New York, p407)

⁹² Deuteronomy 27:4-7, in Cohen, Soncino, p1121

⁹³ http://www.come-and-hear.com/sotah/sotah_13.html <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/h/h35.htm> (Hebrew)

⁹⁴ *Core*, H576, letter 205

⁹⁵ This form of address is very frequently used.

⁹⁶ *Core*, H576 193

ראש שבטי ישראל *Rosh Shivtei Yisrael*, Head of the tribes of Israel.⁹⁷

The influence of the pivotal role of living in Zion in the lives of the Jewish people is evident in so many letters, where Montefiore is the driving force for the fulfilment of the historical yearning of the return of the Jews to Zion, from the despair of exile by the Romans and the Babylonians. The parallels between these ancient woes and the contemporary persecutions of Jews in Europe, Russia and under Ottoman rule, underpinned the Jews' appeals to Montefiore as their hope of salvation for Jews anywhere, and their return to The Holy Land.

The letter writers had good reason for taking this view, as Montefiore himself wrote enthusiastically in his diary of his hopes and plans to repopulate the country with Jews from Europe employed in agriculture, and having the freedom to live by the laws of the *Torah*.⁹⁸ This is reflected in the letters over and over again. Jews from all over the country wrote to Montefiore with requests for help supported by their stories of having moved there with the express purpose of working as manual labourers and studying God's *Torah* in God's Holy Land. The writers knew how important this was to Montefiore. They saw him as the saviour of Zion or Israel, this sentiment frequently appearing in the address section of the letters.⁹⁹ Apart from this romantic, idealistic view, perhaps there was a large dose of pragmatism on the part of the writers, who realised that presenting themselves in this light, Jews attempting to live in the historical Jewish homeland, would be to their advantage when asking for money or any form of assistance.

Numerous letter writers requested money to help people work in agriculture, some describing their existing skills, others explaining that they would like to gain skills in order to work effectively. Some asked Montefiore to buy land for them to keep sheep and goats or plant olive trees; others showed that they had tried very hard to work the land but were unable to make a living from it despite their efforts, and so appealed to Montefiore on compassionate and merciful grounds, asking for money, either as gifts or as loans.¹⁰⁰ Often these appeals for financial assistance were accompanied by assurances of their piety, their knowledge of the *Torah* and *Talmud*, and if applicable, further credentials such as their position in the congregation, their skills as a scribe, or information about books they had written. Appealing to Montefiore on Jewish nationalistic grounds is a common theme in the numerous letters that Jews in The Holy Land sent to him in 1839 and 1849. Examples are:

- Yitzhak son of Shlomo appealed for agricultural work while asserting his scholarship and love of *Torah*. Montefiore is addressed as a lover of the *Torah*;¹⁰¹
- Ten starving *Torah* scholars, originally from Aleppo, begged for money so that they could continue their studies in Zion (Jerusalem);¹⁰²
- Yaakov son of Rabbi Zeev Wolf appealed to Montefiore as both a Jewish religious nationalist, and as a father;¹⁰³
- Eliahu Shlomo suggested that Montefiore buy land in Jaffa, because Shlomo, a plumber, gardener and blacksmith, was willing to cultivate it and plumb it to draw water.¹⁰⁴

Montefiore was widely addressed as father to both individuals and the nation as a whole. As leaders of the Ashkenazi Perushi congregation of Jerusalem put in their letter, להיות אב ופטרונו לכל עדתו...

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, H575, letter 38 62c

⁹⁸ Green, *Moses*, 120-1, Ruth Kark, 1, in her introduction referring to the, '*Hibbat Zion*' movement for Jewish national revival in the 19th century.

⁹⁹ *Core*, H576, letter 61

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, H577, letter 195, H576, letter 164, H575, letter 119a

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, H575, letter 110b

¹⁰² *Ibid*, H575, letter 114

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, H575, letter 117a

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, H577, letter 195

lehi'ot av vepatron ulekhoh edato (Montefiore is.... father and patron to all his congregation).¹⁰⁵ As such he was champion of the poor, orphaned and widowed. Writers called him, *av yotumim* (father of orphans). He and Judith also, who was equally admired and respected, were addressed directly as the mother and father of Israel.¹⁰⁶ People asked for the kind of help that children expect from their parents. For example, some writers asked Montefiore to take them out of the country with them, and find them any work that Montefiore saw fit to arrange for them, (if possible within Montefiore's household) thereby abrogating responsibility for themselves, like a child. One writer directly asked Montefiore to adopt him as his son and support his studies and work. In parallel, Judith was called, 'our good mother'¹⁰⁷ and, in Aramaic, *מטרוניתא הטהרה* *Matronita hatahara* (pure mother), and *אם בישראל* *em beYisrael* (mother in Israel). She and Montefiore were addressed as mother and father of the children of Zion. Letters highlight Raḥel the matriarch in letters to Judith, suggesting a parallel.¹⁰⁸ This is particularly poignant given that Judith had no children, and initiated the renovation of the tomb of Raḥel, the iconic barren woman who eventually conceived. It is thought that Judith prayed at the tomb for fertility, and, according to Abigail Green owned a fertility amulet, a document written by rabbis to help her conceive.¹⁰⁹

Examples demonstrating Montefiore's status as father to the Jews are:

- A widow, Estaria, wrote about her orphaned daughter, while proclaiming Montefiore, in the same letter, to be her father, *בתי בת משה....אב יתומה היא אין לה אב yetuma hi ein la av... biti bat Moshe*;¹¹⁰
- Yosef Farhi explaining that he, a good *Torah* scholar, had been left without support since his parents' death, asked for Montefiore's help;¹¹¹
- Yitzhak son of Rabbi Avraham asked Judith to assist in the brit of his son by his second wife, a privilege traditionally often reserved for the grandparent of a baby. His first family all died in the earthquake.¹¹²

Writers referred to other Jews as their brothers, and drew Montefiore into this circle by the emotional appeal to his 'brotherly consideration,' for help. Furthermore, people, perhaps on the edges of mainstream society, were not afraid to approach Montefiore with their troubles. Eliahu Israel, a Karaite, asked Montefiore for money after suffering severe business losses.¹¹³ Rafael Alfandry, a convert to Islam through coercion, begged Montefiore to help him return to his true faith which he had always kept in his heart, and was prepared to go anywhere that Montefiore saw fit.¹¹⁴

Arguably, the Jews of The Holy Land saw Montefiore in an almost divine, but at least Biblical light, a legendary character who could have had a role in the stories in the *Torah*. This sometimes reveals in letters that they knew nothing about him on a personal level, which is hardly surprising, but which resulted in unfortunate remarks with reference to Judith, and children. For example, in 1839 Israel Dov of Safed blessed the Montefiores with children and grandchildren, when Judith was beyond child-bearing years at the aged of 55. So the writers were either ignorant, unaware of Judith's age,

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, H577, letter 151

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, H576, letter 100

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, H577, letter 201

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, H577, letter 154

¹⁰⁹ Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore, Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero*, (Cambridge, Mass and London 2010), 79-80

¹¹⁰ *Core*, H576, letter 103

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, H576, letter 24

¹¹² *Ibid*, H575, letter 84a

¹¹³ *Ibid*, H577, letter 153

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, H577, letter 150

or foolish but wanting to show their goodwill. Although they admired and revered the Montefiores, this blessing was insensitive, tactless and probably hurtful.¹¹⁵

This theme appears in other letters, often in the closing remarks with the writers blessing the Montefiores in thanks for their past and future good deeds on behalf of Jews around the world. For example, Yosef Amdor of Jerusalem begged Montefiore and Judith to help his failing business. יראו זרע יעשה ה' להם נס מפורסם כמו שעשה עם אברהם אבינו ועם שרה אמנו *yirau zera ya'aseh hashem lahem nes mefursam kemo she asah im Avraham avinu ve im Sarah imanu*, he wrote to them, 'May they see off-spring, may God perform the famous miracle for them like he did with Abraham our father and Sarah our mother.'¹¹⁶ It is 1849 and Judith is 65 years old. This was surely intended as a great compliment to the Montefiores but suggests that the writer knew nothing about them other than their celebrity and legendary status. However, perhaps Amdor, a devout and pious Jew, truly believed that miracles could happen, and that Judith, a woman comparable to Sarai the matriarch, would be rewarded by God, with a child in her old age. Furthermore, Amdor compared Judith and Montefiore to the first of the great patriarchs and matriarchs, giving the former Biblical status. However, the writer, whose world's pivot consisted of religious intellectual references and landmarks alone, wishing to be polite in his address to such eminent people, may have unwittingly only caused offence.

Letters often contain a combination of these various approaches to Montefiore and Judith and analysis of the following one reveals the writer's thoughts about Montefiore both as a potential Jewish Messiah and as comparable to Moshe Rabbeinu. It is an elaborate, 6 line song of praise glorifying Montefiore, in which letters spelling his name are highlighted, proclaiming him king.¹¹⁷ In clear large letters it shows that the numerical gematria values of Shiloh and Moshe are equal, so equating Montefiore with Shiloh. This is highly significant given Shiloh's importance as the place representing the foundation of Judaism; it is where the Ark of the Covenant containing the *Torah*, God's divine word, was kept, from the time of Joshua to Samuel and was a place of religious study and worship. The letter consolidates the sentiment by going on to quote Jacob's dying blessing to his son Judah:

לא יסור שבט מיהודה ומחוקק מבין רגליו עד כי יבא שילה *lo yesur shevet meYehuda umechokek mi bein raglav ad ki yavo Shilah* (The sceptre will not leave Judah until Shiloh comes).¹¹⁸ The Sanhedrin explains that this refers to, 'the rulers of the kingdom until the coming of the King Messiah,' where Shiloh is the Messiah.¹¹⁹ In other words, after the end of the kingdom of Judah, princes will lead the people until the Messiah comes. The preceding statement that Moshe equals Shiloh is unequivocal as is the explanation that Shiloh is the anointed of Israel, יבא שילו משיח ישראל *yavo Shiloh Mashiah Yisrael* ... (until Shiloh comes, the anointed of Israel). Further gematria calculations in the letter led the writers to conclude that Montefiore was the King of the World. They proclaimed him as their shepherd where they were his flock, he was נשיא אלקים *nasi elokim* (the prince of God), and the Messiah would come to Israel in Montefiore's days. The many traits of the Jewish Messiah do not include that of redeemer. However, in this letter the writer also confirmed Montefiore's position as saviour of the Jews from oppression and persecution in the following sentence:

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, H575, letter 27d

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, H576b, letter 91

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, H576, letter 246

¹¹⁸ *Genesis* 49:10. See Appendix 3

¹¹⁹ Much has been written on this verse of Genesis, from Targum Onkelos through the great rabbinical scholars up to the present day. http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8244#showrashi=true gives Rashi's explanation as follows: [This refers] the King Messiah, to whom the kingdom belongs (שילו), and so did Onkelos render it: [until the p1210] Messiah comes, to whom the kingdom belongs]. According to the Midrash Aggadah, ['Shiloh' is a combination of] שיל, a gift to him, as it is said: 'they will bring a gift to him who is to be feared' (Ps. 76:12). – [From Gen. Rabbah ed. Theodore-Albeck p1210].

ze hashir sheḥibarti ani hatsa'ir al ge'ulatenu ve'al pedut nafshenu (This is the song I wrote.....about our redemption and the salvation of our souls). This echoes a similar sentence in the *Hagaddah*, the story of Passover, the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery from Egypt, led by God's servant Moses, into freedom.¹²⁰ The message could not be clearer. Moses Montefiore, the modern (19th century) saviour of the Jews from persecution and oppression, in The Holy Land and Europe, is being likened to the Biblical Moses, redeemer of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt.

They signed the letter dating year 5609/1849 using a chronogram in the manner ubiquitous to these letters, by quoting from the *Torah*. The words used to form this number are the final two in the sentence, *שנת אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל* *shnat az yashir Moshe ubnei Yisrael* (Then Moses and the children of Israel sang) from Exodus 15:1 This sentence was specially chosen to suit the content and message of the letter, notably likening Montefiore to Moshe Rabbeinu, who sang this with the Children of Israel after leading them out of Egypt to redemption, and across the parted Red Sea. So the writer consolidated the relationship between the Jews of The Holy Land and Montefiore, as enslaved flock awaiting redemption, and great saviour.

Montefiore was many things to the Jews in The Holy Land. He was benefactor, observant Jew, educated scholar, father, lover of Zion, leader, king, ruler over all Israel and the Diaspora, arguably an angel of God, comparable to the Rambam, Moshe Rabbeinu and the patriarch Abraham, and even God. Some of these qualities, together with clues in the titles given to Montefiore, also suggest that some writers may have thought of him as the Messiah, imbued with the requirements of the latter; he was a judge of disputes within and beyond the Jewish world, he was an observant Jew, a wise and educated man, he was king and military leader with power.

As a possible Jewish Messiah, equal to the Biblical redeemer Moses, and likened to other great Jewish characters in the Bible and more recent history, Montefiore was put on a very high pedestal indeed. Astonishingly, some titles, with which he was addressed, clearly refer to God in the *Torah* and Jewish liturgy, and may be unprecedented in their application to a mere mortal. In the context of the harsh reality of life for Jews in The Holy Land and further afield, Montefiore was an icon to whom they looked up with hope and thanks, for the assistance he gave them. A larger than life figure, they treated him like a father, to individuals and to the people as a whole, a man with the power and clout to influence world leaders to improve the lot of the Jews they ruled over. So letters asking him to deal with the Pasha, the Sultan, the Tsar, the Emperor, the Consul, the King, the local Christian or Muslim leader, constituted a reasonable expectation that Montefiore could produce a positive result, whether it be for individuals or the whole community. As their 'king' he was invited to intervene in and solve internal problems too. As a religious Jew he was respected like a Talmudic sage, and as a lover of Zion, the man who could make the dream of the return to Zion, founded in the pages of the *Torah*, a reality for so many Jews. No problem was too small or large for his attention, rich and poor alike appealed to him. From manifesting God's historic and religious message on earth, through persuading a tsar to relax damaging edicts against Jews, or gaining the desirable passport for Jews caught up in international rule involving Russian, Prussian, Austrian, Ottoman and English jurisdiction, to settling a row over some stolen shirts, Montefiore was the Jews' representative and figurehead for all their troubles. It appears that many of the writers either saw him as the Messiah, or very much wanted him to be so. In addition, they saw him as their saviour in a usually very harsh world because he gave them hope for their salvation, survival and future wellbeing. Perhaps this was essential to their survival, though a contradiction in terms, it was concrete spirituality and belief they could latch on to in the misery of their lives, in their sometimes intolerable existence. Here was a rich Jew, a powerful advocate, a living icon, with a proven track

¹²⁰ Passover service before *Rahatsa*, the washing of the hands before the festive meal.

record of supporting the Jews practically and spiritually, so great that he had become the stuff of Jewish legends and history in his own lifetime - maybe for the Jews of The Holy Land in the 1840s, he really could have been the Messiah. He was, in all senses, a giant of a man.

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Appendix

Criteria for Messiah:

1. Psalm 72

1 Concerning Solomon. O God, give Your judgments to a king and Your righteousness to a king's son.	א לשלמה אלהים משפטיך למלך תן וצדקתך לבן מלך:
2 May he judge Your people justly, and Your poor people with justice.	ב יִדִּין עַמְּךָ בְּצֶדֶק וְעֲנִיֶיךָ בְּמִשְׁפָּט:
3 May the mountains bear peace for the people, and the hills-through righteousness.	ג יִשְׂאוּ הָרִים שְׁלוֹם לְעָם וּגְבוּעוֹת בְּצֶדֶקָה:
4 May he judge the poor of the people; may he save the children of the needy and crush the oppressor.	ד יִשְׁפֹּט עֲנִי עִם יוֹשִׁיעַ לְבְנֵי אֲבִיו וַיִּדְכָּא עוֹשֵׁק:
5 May they fear You in the presence of the sun and before the moon for generations upon generations.	ה יִירָאוּךָ עִם שֶׁמֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי יָרֵחַ דּוֹר דּוֹרִים:
6 May it descend as rain upon cut vegetation, as raindrops that drip upon the earth.	ו יֵרֵד כְּמָטָר עַל גֶּזַע כְּרִבִּיבִים זֶרְזִיף אֶרֶץ:
7 May the righteous flourish in his days, and much peace until there is no moon.	ז יִפְרַח בְּיָמָיו צְדִיק וְרַב שְׁלוֹם עַד בְּלִי יָרֵחַ:
8 And may he reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the land.	ח וַיִּרְדּוּ מַיִם עַד יָם וּמִנְהַר עַד אֶפְסֵי אֶרֶץ:
9 May nobles kneel before him, and may his enemies lick the dust.	ט לִפְנֵי יִכְרְעוּ צִיִּים וְאֹיְבָיו עָפָר יִלְחֲכוּ:
10 May the kings of Tarshish and the isles return tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba approach with a gift.	י מַלְכֵי תַרְשִׁישׁ וְאִיִּים מִנְחָה יָשִׁיבוּ מַלְכֵי שֶׁבַע וּסְבָא אֲשֶׁכֶר יִקְרִיבוּ:
11 And all kings will prostrate themselves to him; may all nations serve him.	יא וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לוֹ כָּל מַלְכִּים כָּל גּוֹיִם יַעֲבֹדוּהוּ:
12 For he will save a needy one who cries out, and a poor one who has no helper.	יב כִּי יִצִּיל אֲבִיוֹן מִשּׁוּעַ וְעֲנִי וְאִין עֹזֵר לוֹ:
13 He will have pity on the poor and needy, and he will save the souls of the needy.	יג יִחַס עַל דָּל וְאֲבִיוֹן וְנַפְשׁוֹת אֲבִיוֹנִים יוֹשִׁיעַ:
14 From blows and from robbery he will redeem their soul, and their blood will be dear in his eyes.	יד מִתּוֹךְ וּמִחַמַס יִגְאֹל נַפְשָׁם וַיִּיקָר דָּמָם בְּעֵינָיו:
15 And may he live, and He will give him of the gold of Sheba, and may He pray for him constantly; all the days may He bless him.	טו וַיְחִי וַיִּתֵּן לוֹ מִזֶּהָב שֶׁבַע וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל בְּעַדוֹ תָּמִיד כָּל הַיּוֹם יְבָרְכֶנּוּהוּ:

16 May there be an abundance of grain in the land, on the mountain peaks; may its fruit rustle like Lebanon, and they will blossom forth from the city like the grass of the earth.

טז יהי פסת בר | בארץ בראש הרים ירעש
פלגון פרו | יצו מעיר כעשב הארץ:

17 May his name be forever; before the sun, his name will be magnified, and [people] will bless themselves with him; all nations will praise him.

יז יהי שמו | לעולם לפני שמש ינון (כתיב
ינין) שמו יתברכו בו כל גוים יאשרהו:

18 Blessed is the Lord God, the God of Israel, Who performs wonders alone.

יח ברוך | יהוה אלהים אלהי ישראל עשה
נפלאות לבדו:

19 And blessed is His glorious name forever, and His glory will fill the entire earth. Amen and amen.

יט וברוך | שם כבודו לעולם וימלא כבודו את כל
הארץ אמן | ואמן:

20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are completed.

כ כלו תפלות דוד בן ישי:

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16293

2. Ezekiel 37 24:28

24 And My servant David shall be king over them, and one shepherd shall be for them all, and they shall walk in My ordinances and observe My statutes and perform them.

כד ועבדי דוד מלך עליהם ורועה אחד יהיה לכלם
ובמשפטי ילכו וחקתי ישמרו ועשו אותם:

25 And they shall dwell on the land that I have given to My servant, to Jacob, wherein your forefathers lived; and they shall dwell upon it, they and their children and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.

כה וישבו על הארץ אשר נתתי לעבדי ליעקב
אשר ישבו בה אבותיכם וישבו עליה המה
ובניהם ובני בניהם עד עולם ודוד עבדי נשיא
להם לעולם:

26 And I will form a covenant of peace for them, an everlasting covenant shall be with them; and I will establish them and I will multiply them, and I will place My Sanctuary in their midst forever.

כו וקרתי להם ברית שלום ברית עולם יהיה
אותם ונתתים והרביתי אותם ונתתי את מקדשי
בתוכם לעולם:

27 And My dwelling place shall be over them, and I will be to them for a God, and they shall be to Me as a people.

כז והיה משכני עליהם והייתי להם לאלהים
והמה יהיו לי לעם:

28 And the nations shall know that I am the Lord, Who sanctifies Israel, when My Sanctuary is in their midst forever."

כח וידעו הגוים כי אני יהוה מקדש את ישראל
בהיות מקדשי בתוכם לעולם:

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16135

3. Genesis 49:10

10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the student of the law from between his feet, **until Shiloh comes**, and to him will be a gathering of peoples.

י לא יסור שבט מיהודה ומחזק מבין
רגליו עד כי יבא שילה ולו יקהת עמים

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8244#v=10

