



A *Tzaddik* or a King?

How do we picture the perfect leader? In the important Kabbalistic book, *Tikunei Zohar*, it is written that the Nation of Israel was called ten different names: “Wise men, prophets, masters of Torah and more, all parallel to the order of the ten sefirot. This means that there are ten types of archetypical personalities in Israel. Further, this is a living description of the history of the Nation of Israel. In our history we have an era of prophets, an era of wise men, etc.

We will focus on two archetypes from the list: *Tzaddikim* (righteous people) and kings. Clearly, the era of the *tzaddikim* was during the last three hundred years, from the time of the progenitor of Chassidut, the Ba'al Shem Tov. It is no coincidence that the leaders of Chassidut were called *tzaddikim*. The *tzaddik* of Chassidut does not just live a righteous life unto himself. Almost always, he is the persona of a leader and guide to a large public. He is a *tzaddik* with some aspects of a king. Parallel to the *tzaddikim* of Chassidut, there were other very important figures, distinct masters of Torah. Chassidut, however, characterizes the spirit of that era in the Nation of Israel.

As we are approaching the ultimate destiny, “I believe in the coming of Mashiach,” then the coming era will be the era of kings. This is also the order of the sefirot. The *tzaddikim* parallel the sefirah of Foundation, while the kings parallel the sefirah of Kingdom, the final *sefirah*.

What about today? Everyone admits that it is difficult to reconstruct the unique greatness of the Chassidic *tzaddikim* of previous generations. It is clear that a new era must arrive – the era of the kingdom of Israel. We are now in the transition state between *tzaddikim* and kings. Thus, we sometimes feel like we are at the short end of both.

Does this mean that the king is not a righteous person? Not at all. Would anyone think that we are anticipating a king who does not walk the Torah path? After all, the Mashiach is the persona of a great *tzaddik*, “And I will raise for

David a righteous shoot and he will be king.”¹ He is a *tzaddik* and he is also a chassid and he is also a prophet, as Maimonides writes, that he includes all the personas. Ultimately, however, he is a king. The manner in which he rules reflects all the qualities of the other personas.

So what do we prefer? A king or a *tzaddik*? The answer is of course, that we want both. A king who is a *tzaddik*. The goal is to find the connection between the persona of the *tzaddik* and the king, so that the transition between the eras will go as smoothly as possible.

There is no doubt that the persona of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in our generation is the quintessential example of the connection between a Chassidic *tzaddik* and a royal leader.

Appropriate to the current month of Shevat, we see the perfect connection between the *tzaddik* and the king in the letter and name of the month. The letter of the month of Shevat is the *tzaddik*. The numerical value of the letter *tzaddik* (90) equals *melech*, ‘king’! Further, ‘Shevat’ also means ‘scepter -’ the royal scepter, the leader and king. “A star shall step forth from Jacob and a scepter shall rise from Israel,”² referring to the King Mashiach, may he come speedily in our days!

¹ Jeremiah 23:5.

² Numbers 24:17.