A VISION for MASHIACH

THE REBBE AND THE RAMBAM





LESSON 2
The Road to Redemption



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I. FOUR PROPHECIES

INTRODUCTION

Last week we learned that Mashiach's primary role will be to restore the practice of Torah and *mitzvos* to what it was when we lived in Erets Yisrael. In this context, we explored the two proofs from the Torah that the Rambam cited.

The first proof is from the book of Devarim, where the Torah foretells that Hashem will return the Jewish people to Erets Yisrael, which will enable us to fulfill all the *mitzvos* that are related to living in Erets Yisrael. The second proof is from the prophecy of Bilam in the book of Bamidbar, where the Torah speaks of Mashiach's role as a successor to David Hamelech.

We explained that as a king, Mashiach will restore all that David Hamelech accomplished: he will rebuild the Beis Hamikdash and provide stability and security, which will enable us to fulfill all the *mitzvos*.

This leaves us with a disturbing question: Are we waiting for thousands of years just to return to David Hamelech's days? As wonderful as those days were for us in Erets Yisrael, the rest of the world was pagan. Moreover, many of them secretly detested us and attacked us whenever they could. Eventually, they succeeded in uprooting us from our land.

Will Mashiach not do better? Can't Mashiach improve on David Hamelech's achievements and actually transform the status quo so that Hashem could be revealed, and the nations of the world could embrace Him openly? Doesn't it stand to reason that the endgame of creation is for the entire world to acknowledge its Creator and embrace Him willingly?

To answer this question and to gain a better understanding of how profoundly Mashiach will impact the world, leaving no stone



unturned and no soul unmoved, we must delve into Bilam's prophecy in more detail.

Last week, we didn't read Bilam's actual prophecy. We just mentioned that he correlated David Hamelech with Mashiach. Today, we will explore Bilam's words more carefully and learn the Rebbe's keen analysis of the links that he drew between them:

TEXT 1

Numbers 24: 17-19

אֶרְאֶנוּ וְלֹא עַתָּה אֲשׁוּרֶנוּ וְלֹא קָרוֹב דְרַךְ כּוֹכָב מִיְעַקֹב וְקָם שֵׁבֶט מִיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמָחַץ פַּאֲתֵי מוֹאָב וְקַרְקַר כָּל־בְּנֵי־שַׁת. וְהָיָה אֶדוֹם יְרַשָּׁה וְהָיָה יֵרשָׁה שֵׂעִיר אֹיָבִיו וִיִשִּׂרָאֵל עֹשֵׂה חָיָל.

I see it, but not now; I behold it, but not soon. A star has gone forth from Yaakov, and a staff will arise from Israel, crushing Moav's princes and uprooting all of Sheis's descendants. Edom will be possessed, and Se'ir will be inherited by his enemies and Israel will triumph.

Bilam was discussing a future event. "I see it, but not now"—it will happen, but not just yet. Which event was he discussing here?

Rambam delves into these words and explains that Bilam was discussing two separate epochs. The epoch of David Hamelech and the epoch of Mashiach. He broke down these epochs into four statements:

TEXT 2

Rambam, Mishneh Torah, *Hilchos Melachim Umilchamoseihem*, 11:1

יאֶרְאֶנוּ וְלֹא עַתָּה," זֶה דָוִד.
 יאֱשׁוּרֶנוּ וְלֹא קָרוֹב," זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַמְשִׁיחַ.



- ידְרַךְ כּוֹכָב מִיַעֲקֹב," זֶה דָוִד.
 יוָקַם שֵׁבֶט מִישִּׁרְאֵל," זַה מֵלֵךְ הַמַשִּׁיח."
- 3. "וּּמֶחַץ פַּאֲתֵי מוֹאָב," זֶה דָוִד. וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר "וַיַּךְ אֶת מוֹאָב וַיְמַדְדֵם בּחָבָל" (שמואל ב: ח, ב). בַּחֲבָל" (שמואל ב: ח, ב בי ח, ב בּתַבָּל

״וְקַרְקַר כָּל בְּנֵי שֵׁת,״ זֶה הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְשִׁיחַ, שֶׁנֶאֲמֵר בּוֹ, ״וּמְשְׁלוֹ מִיָם עַד יַם״ (זכריה ט, י).

4. ״וְהָיָה אֱדוֹם יְרַשָּׁה,״ זֶה דָוִד, שֶׁנֶאֱמֵר ״וַתְּהִי אֱדוֹם לְדָוִד לַעֲבָדִים״ וְגוֹי (שמואל ב: ח, יד)

"וְהָיָה יְרִשָּׁה" וְגוֹי, זֶה הַמֶּלֶּךְ הַמְשִׁיחַ, שֶׁנֶאֱמַר, "וְעָלוּ מוֹשִׁעִים בְּהַר צִיוֹן" וגוֹי (עובדיה א, כא).

- 1. "I see it, but not now" refers to David.
- "I behold it, but not in the near future" refers to Mashiach.
- 2. "A star will go forth from Yaakov" refers to David.

"And a staff will arise from Israel" refers to Mashiach.

- 3. "Crushing all of Moav's princes" refers to David, as the Torah states, "He smote Moav and measured them with a line" (II Shmuel 8:2).
- "Uprooting all of Sheis's descendants" refers to Mashiach, about whom the Torah states, "He will rule from sea to sea" (Zechariah 9:10).
- 4. "Edom (Esav's descendants) will be possessed" refers to David, as the Torah states, "Edom became servants of David" (II Shmuel 8:6).



"Se'ir (Esav's extended family) will become the inheritance" refers to Mashiach, as the Torah states, "Saviors will ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esav" (Ovadiah 1:21).

Last week we learned that Rambam cited Bilam's prophecy to demonstrate that Mashiach will succeed David Hamelech, and thereby restore the Davidic kingdom. But this point is made by stating that the two are joined in Bilam's prophecy. Why does Rambam break it down so carefully into four categories? Wouldn't it be sufficient to demonstrate the general link?

The casual reader might reasonably conclude that since Rambam needed to demonstrate a general link, he figured that he may as well decode the entire prophecy. But as we learned last week, the Rebbe's approach is that nothing in *Mishneh Torah* is superfluous. If Rambam added extra words, he was hinting at a message about the era of Mashiach that is not readily available.

What might that message be?

SUMMARY

By analyzing the prophecies of Bilam, Rambam highlights four links between David Hamelech and Mashiach. This demonstrates that Mashiach will succeed David Hamelech and become a Jewish king.

In the next section we will break down these four categories and discover that each represents a new stage in the journey to redemption.

The Entire Torah

Rambam demonstrates that each pasuk in this prophecy speaks of Mashiach. Rambam goes further in the next halachah and writes that all the books of the prophets are filled with the subject of Mashiach. This sounds hyperbolic because most chapters of the prophets speak of other subjects. The Rebbe explains that the Rambam meant precisely what he wrote. If you drill down enough and explore the writings of the commentaries, you will find relevance to Mashiach in every single pasuk, including pesukim that speak of Galus.

Sefer Hasichos 5751:2, p. 518



A GRADUAL TRANSFORMATION

The Rebbe explains that each of these four categories is a critical stage on the road to universal redemption. Mashiach will change the world. Under his influence, every human will embrace G-d readily and enthusiastically. But it will be a long process. He will begin by working on himself, then work with the Jewish people, and finally focus on all of humanity. In each of these stages, Mashiach will pick up where David Hamelech left off.

The Rebbe begins his analysis by reflecting on Rambam's criteria for an authentic Mashiach:

TEXT 3

Rambam, Ibid., 11:4

וָאָם יַעֵמֹד מֱלֶךְ מָבֵּית דַוָד הוֹגָה בַּתּוֹרָה וְעוֹסֵק בִּמְצִוֹת כְּדַוִד אַבִּיו, כְּפִי תורה שַבַּכתב ושַבעל פַה.

וַיַכֹף כֵּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵילֶהְ בָּה וּלְחַזֶּק בְּדְקַה.

וָיַלַחֵם מִלְחַמוֹת ה', הַרֵי זֶה בְּחַזְקַת שֶׁהוּא מַשִּׁיחַ. אִם עַשַׂה וְהִצְלִיחַ, ונצח כל האומות שסביביו', וּבָנָה מִקְדָשׁ בִּמְקוֹמוֹ, וְקִבֵּץ נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בַּרִי זֶה מַשִּׁיחַ בַּוַדַאי. 2

The Rebbe breaks it down in this unusual fashion because, in this sichah, the Rebbe is not focused on when Mashiach transitions from presumptive to actual. In this sichah, the Rebbe is concerned with the transition from fighting the nations to changing the very fabric of their nature, so that they willingly accept the one G-d. The transition here occurs

From Moshe To Mashiach

Mashiach will transform the world into a habitat for G-dliness and spark a universal shift toward Hashem. He will achieve this transcendental feat by the power of his absolute commitment to the Torah. Torah transcends all of creation. Through the Torah, even the material world can channel divinity and holiness. This is why our sages taught, "Moshe was the first redeemer and will be the final redeemer" (Shemos Rabbah 2:4). They couldn't have meant that Moshe will be the actual Mashiach since he was not from shevet Yehudah. They meant that Mashiach will redeem the world from its limitations through the power of the Torah that Moshe revealed.

Likutei Sichos 11, pp. 8-13



¹ The phrase: ונצח כל האומות שסביביו doesn't appear in the conventional version of the Rambam. However, it appears in the Yemenite manuscripts of Mishneh Torah that were carefully preserved by the Yemenite Jewish community.

² This section is broken down in an unusual fashion. Ordinarily, the first few words of this section, "If he will fight the wars of Hashem, he may be assumed to be Mashiach," is the end of section two. Until this point, he is presumed to be Mashiach, if he goes on to accomplish two pivotal feats, building the Beis Hamikdash and ingathering the exiles, he makes the critical transition to the definite Mashiach.

וִיתַקֵן אֶת הָעוֹלֶם כָּלוֹ לַעֲבֹד אֶת ה' בְּיַחַד שֶׁנֶאֲמַר, "כִּי אָז אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל עָמִים שַּׁפָה בִרוּרָה לִקְרֹא כָלַם בִּשִׁם ה' וּלְעַבִדוֹ שָׁכֶם אֵחָד" (צפני' ג ט).

If a king will arise from the House of David who, like David his ancestor, will diligently contemplate the Torah and observes its mitzvos as prescribed by the written and oral Torah;

And who will compel all of Israel to walk in (the ways of the Torah) and rectify any breaches in its observance;

If he will fight the wars of Hashem, he may be assumed to be Mashiach. If he succeeds in the above, conquers all the nations around him, builds the Beis Hamikdash in its proper place, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is definitely Mashiach.

He will then rectify the entire world by motivating all the nations to serve Hashem together, as the Torah states: "I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of Hashem and serve Him with one purpose" (Tsephaniah 3:9).

In this reading, we see that Mashiach appears to have four criteria.³

- 1. To be a diligent student of Torah and a meticulous observer of *mitzvos*.
- 2. To persuade Jews to return to the path of Torah and *mitzvos*.
- 3. To defeat the nations that would seek to prevent this.⁴
- 4. To rectify the entire world and motivate all nations to serve G-d.

after he is definitively Mashiach. Therefore, it is at this point that Rambam's language shifts from "fighting" and "conquering" to "rectifying" and "motivating."



³ These are different from the specific accomplishments that we discussed last week. Those were the four things he is meant to accomplish for Jews when he redeems them. He must restore (a) the Davidic kingdom, (b) the *Beis Hamikdash*, (c) the Jews to their Land, and (d) the laws of the Torah. These criteria begin before the Redemption and affect the entire world, not just the Jews.

⁴ This section also includes building the Beis Hamikdash and bringing about the ingathering of Jews. However, despite their critical importance, they are not relevant to today's discussion. They were relevant to last week's discussion.

With these criteria, Rambam traces a path from Mashiach's private life to the world at large. Let's break it down step by step:

- 1. If Mashiach is meant to restore the Torah, as we discussed last week, he must be diligent in Torah study and meticulous in mitzvah observance.
- 2. Any Torah scholar can be diligent and scrupulous, but to be Mashiach one also needs to be a positive influence on others. This means to teach, cajole, inspire, and persuade the Jewish people to embrace Hashem with such dazzling love that the prosaic allures of mundane life will seem pedestrian by comparison.
- 3. Over the years, there were many Jewish leaders who worked diligently to teach and inspire their fellow Jews. But to be Mashiach, his influence must be felt throughout the world. Today, the world is ruled by a host of governments, social systems, and value sets that are not in line with the Torah. Mashiach will be such a force for the truth that the nations will feel compelled to support the Jews as we build the Beis Hamikdash and return to Erets Yisrael.⁵
- 4. If he does this, he is certainly Mashiach, but his job is not over. Compelling the nations to embrace G-d means that it is against their will. Once his teachings take root and the Mashiach atmosphere prevails, it will perforce make an indelible impression on all of humanity. He will create an environment so in sync with G-dliness that the nations will be moved, of their own free will, to serve Hashem and to facilitate maximum mitzvah observance. When the nations proclaim their enthusiastic allegiance and love for the one true G-d, Mashiach will truly be a global king.

What We Can and Must Do

The Alter Rebbe explained in Tanya (chapter 37) that Mashiach will come because of our work and actions during Galus. Therefore, our work must be consistent with the results that they will produce. Mashiach will (a) inspire himself, (b) inspire the Jewish people, and (c) inspire the nations. Accordingly, our efforts must focus on all three areas. We must (a) commit ourselves to diligence in Torah study and mitzvos, (b) inspire other Jews to do likewise, and (c) inspire universal observance of the Sheva Mitzvos Benei Noach.

Toras Menachem 5745:3, p.

⁵ This need not be through actual war, necessarily. It can also be achieved through the power of his charisma and the profundity of his wisdom. In other words, it can be a battle of wills and a war of words that is conducted with love and respect. See Yeshayahu 11:4, ""יַבְּשָׁרֶט פִּיו וּבְרוּחַ שְׂפָתָיו יָטִית רָשָׁע" - He will strike the earth with the staff of his mouth and with the beat of his lips he will slay the wicked. See *Toras Menachem* 5752:1, p. 297.



TRACING THE PROPHECY

These four criteria are logical, but how did Rambam know to set them up precisely this way?

When considering these criteria, most people might not catch the significance of the fact that they break down into four parts. But to the Rebbe, this fact looms large. It is like a road sign that points back to Bilam's prophecy, which also included four stages.

When you look at these four prophecies, you see that they teach us Mashiach's four criteria. Together they tell us what we can expect of Mashiach, and how we might learn to identify him when he comes.

Let's break it down:

- 1. When Bilam said, "I see it, but not now," referring to David, and "I behold it, but not soon," referring to Mashiach, he was describing the person. He saw their virtue and scholarship. He beheld their diligence and scruples. He could see them in the future.
- 2. When Bilam proclaimed, "A star has gone forth from Yaakov," referring to David, and "A staff will arise from Israel," referring to Mashiach, he was describing their influence on the Jews. The people of Yaakov looked up to David Hamelech, as people look up to a star, and were inspired to emulate him by seeking higher and better spiritual achievements. As a staff that rules over Israel, Mashiach will similarly lead and inspire the Jewish people.
- 3. When Bilam prophesied that they would, "crush Moav's princes," referring to David, and "uproot all of Sheis's descendants," referring to Mashiach, he was describing their influence over the nations. David Hamelech fought many wars against Israel's neighboring tribes until peace settled over the Land. Mashiach will use his compelling force to silence all opposition and ensure universal compliance with his ideals.
- 4. When Bilam concluded, "Edom will be possessed," referring to David, and "Se'ir will be inherited by his enemies," referring to Mashiach, he was talking about the nations embracing G-d out of goodwill. Saying that Edom will become the possession of David Hamelech means that they will subscribe to the Jewish mindset



and serve it willingly. Similarly, saying that Se'ir will be inherited by Israel means that Se'ir will embrace the Jewish heritage.

We now understand precisely why Rambam analyzed each of the four prophecies rather than demonstrating in broad terms that Mashiach would succeed David Hamelech. He wanted to demonstrate that Mashiach will restore everything that David Hamelech achieved for the Jews. He will be David Hamelech's equal in Torah. He will exert a positive influence on the Jewish people like David Hamelech. He will dominate his enemies like David Hamelech, and he will eventually bring them around as David Hamelech did.

SUMMARY

Rambam identified four criteria for Mashiach. Bilam offered four prophecies about David Hamelech and Mashiach. The criteria and prophecies line up perfectly to demonstrate that Mashiach will restore everything that David Hamelech achieved for the Jews.

In the next section we will demonstrate that Mashiach will not only restore what David Hamelech accomplished; he will improve on it.



III. COSMIC LEAPS

IMPACT ON JEWS

We began this lesson with a question: Have we waited thousands of years only to have a repeat of David Hamelech's accomplishments? Surely, the era of Mashiach, the pinnacle of creation and endgame of history, is meant to supersede that. Surely, G-d's creation is meant to embrace G-d completely and fully, unlike the pagan nations in the days of David Hamelech. Yet, everything we learned till now only tells us that Mashiach will be a David Hamelech 2.0.

Moreover, as much as David Hamelech accomplished, it wasn't enough because his achievements eventually eroded. Mashiach can't afford to merely repeat what David Hamelech did. He will need to improve upon it in a resounding way so that his achievements remain for posterity.

As the Rebbe analyzes the prophecies cited by Rambam, he demonstrates that this, too, is implicit in Rambam's message.⁶ In each of the criteria that we discussed above, Mashiach will not only pick up where David Hamelech left off, he will supersede him.

In the section describing their influence over the Jewish people, the Rebbe found subtle differences in the text that highlights Mashiach's superiority over David Hamelech:⁷

TEXT 4

The Rebbe, Likutei Sichos 18, pp. 282–283

אויף דוד'ן ווערט געזאגט דער לשון א כוכב וואס ווייזט אויף אזא וואס איז מרומם ומנושא פון אנדערע בני אדם . . אבער בנוגע צו משיח'ן איז מרומם ומנושא פון אנדערע בני אדם . . זאגט ער וקם שבט, וואס פירושו כפשוטו איז מלך רודה ומושל, וואס דאס איז בגלוי בא משיח'ן, ויכוף כל ישראל לילך בה ולחזק בדקה.



David is described as a star, which implies exaltedness over ordinary people.⁸ . . . Mashiach is described as a ruler—a king who rules dominantly.⁹ This is expressed through Mashiach's ability to compel Israel to walk in the Torah's ways and rectify its breaches.

As an exalted ruler, David Hamelech set an example for the people to follow, but he didn't engage with them to teach and guide them. Like a star, he was at the top and the people would look up and emulate him. Mashiach will not only set an example, but also rule. Despite his exaltedness, he will integrate with the people and find pathways to their minds and hearts. His teachings will be so compelling that they will respond to him.¹⁰

DOMINANCE OVER NATIONS

With respect to their ability to bend the nations to their will, the Rebbe found similar nuances that reveal the differences between them.

TEXT 5

The Rebbe, Likutei Sichos, Ibid.

בא דוד איז נאר (א) מחץ (ב) פאתי מואב, און בא משיח'ן (א) וקרקר (ב) כל בני שת די שליטה אויף אלע אומות.

David is described as (a) crushing (b) the princes of Moav whereas Mashiach will (a) uproot (b) all descendants of Sheis—all the nations.

¹⁰ Another nuanced difference is that in the section about David Hamelech, we are described as Yaakov; in the section about Mashiach, we are described as Yisrael. Of the two, Yaakov, which means a heel, describes Jews at their lowest level. Yisrael, which means a G-dly minister, describes the Jews at their highest level.



⁸ See Radak, Numbers 24:17, "Because of his power and exalted greatness, a king is like a star."

⁹ Rashi, ad loc.

When the enemy is crushed, they can rebuild and mount a counterattack. Also, if only one enemy is crushed, they can seek assistance from their allies. When all the enemies are not only crushed, but also uprooted, there is no hope for further resistance.

Indeed, despite David Hamelech's dominance over his enemies, the Jewish people were eventually exiled from Erets Yisrael. When Mashiach will compel the nations to stand aside as Jews rebuild the Beis Hamikdash and return to Erets Yisrael, it will be for posterity.

RECTIFYING THE WORLD

The final benchmark that Mashiach will reach is rectifying the world so that the nations will freely acknowledge G-d and serve Him, shoulder to shoulder. David Hamelech achieved this to a degree,¹¹ but Mashiach will outpace him:

TEXT 6

The Rebbe, Likutei Sichos, Ibid.

בנודע לדוד זאגט מען, "והי' אדום ירשה," וואס דאס דריקט זיך אויס אין דעם וואס, "ותהי אדום לדוד עבדים." און בנוגע משיח'ן-"והי' ירשה שעיר אויביו," ניט נאר די אנשי העיר. און ווי ער זאגט אין פסוק, " ועלו מושעים בהר ציון לשפט את הר עשו," וואס סיומו איז, "והיתה לה' המלוכה."

Of David it is written, "Edom will be possessed," which is expressed through, "Edom became servants of David." Of Mashiach it is written, "[Mount] Se'ir will be inherited," as the passage states, "Saviors will ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esav," and it concludes with the words, "and G-d will have the kingdom."



 $^{^{11}}$ As reflected by the many nations who streamed to the Beis Hamikdash during the reign of King Solomon (his son and successor) to bring offerings and to acknowledge the one G-d.

Mashiach will do two things better than David Hamelech. (A) David Hamelech swayed the nations to serve him. Surely, they had a relationship with G-d through David, but it was not direct. Mashiach will establish G-d as the king of the world, and the nations will submit directly to G-d.¹² (B) As we delineated in the previous section, David Hamelech only held sway over a small group of people compared to Mashiach, who will hold sway over the entire world.¹³

CONCLUSION

Had Rambam merely pointed out that Bilam linked Mashiach to David Hamelech, we would only know that Mashiach would restore the Torah to what it was in David Hamelech times as we learned last week. By breaking down the four prophecies, which inform Mashaich's four criteria, Rambam clued us in to Mashiach's global mandate. He will create an atmosphere so holy and compelling that the entire world, not only the Jews, will be inspired to embrace Hashem utterly and completely. Every sentient being will declare their total allegiance to Hashem and become completely responsive to His will.¹⁴

We have thus expanded our understanding of Mashiach's role as the restorer of the Torah. We don't only mean that he will restore our ability to perform all the *mitzvos*. We also mean that through

¹⁴ See *Igros Melech* 2, p. 84. See also *Sefer Hasichos* 5748:2, p. 389, where it is noted that, ironically, Mashiach will only fulfill his mandate when the non-Jews embrace G-d. Everything he will do for Jews won't fulfill his messianic mandate because it won't be unique to him. Shlomo Hamelech and Chizkiyahu Hamelech both already achieved that.



¹² There is a deeper element here. David Hamelech's emphasis was on bringing the nations to serve G-d. Mashiach's emphasis will be on revealing that G-d is the true king of the world. The focus won't be on the people, it will be on G-d. The people's servitude will result from that.

¹³ The Rebbe also points out that by looking carefully at these *pesukim* we can see the distinction between the third and fourth stages. The third stage speaks of fighting a war and crushing the enemy, which implies that the enemy would have continued to fight had they not been defeated. The fourth stage speaks of inheritance and rectifying the world. When we inherit something, it belongs to us truly and fully. Similarly, when Mashaich comes, the nations will embrace Hashem without reservation and will, therefore, make a lasting and irreversible commitment.

his efforts, the Torah will assume its natural and inherent role as a universal spiritual guide.

May our learning about Mashiach, and our excitement over his coming, hasten his arrival. Amen.

SUMMARY

Everything that David Hamelech did, Mashiach will do better. This is why Mashiach's achievements will be felt throughout the world and will remain for posterity.

KEY POINTS

- 1. Mashiach's ultimate goal will be for every sentient being to recognize and embrace the one G-d. Accordingly, Mashiach will outpace even the achievements of David Hamelech, whom he will succeed.
- 2. David Hamelech inspired the Jews and enabled them to fulfill all the *mitzvos*. Mashiach will inspire them to even greater heights.
- 3. David Hamelech was victorious over the neighboring nations. Mashiach will bend the entire globe to his will.
- 4. David Hamelech helped Israel's neighboring nations see the light of the Torah. Mashiach will inspire a global movement, as all people will embrace and worship G-d.

