

# A VISION *for* MASHIACH

THE REBBE AND THE RAMBAM



IT'S  
TIME TO  
KNOW

SEIZE THE MOMENT. GAIN CLARITY IN THE  
REBBE'S TEACHINGS ON MOSHIACH

LESSON 5  
Miracles and Proofs



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## I. TWO STAGES

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Learning Exercise*

*What changes to the natural order do you visualize when you think about Mashiach?*

In answering this question, you likely imagined a host of miraculous phenomena. How would you feel if I told you that none of it will necessarily happen and life may be pretty much the same as before?

There are many prophecies and Talmudic statements that foretell incredible miracles that will occur in the era of Mashiach. For example, the Talmud tells us that all trees will be fruit bearing. The prophets tell us that the wolf will dwell with the lamb. It is, therefore, surprising, and not a little disappointing, that Rambam declares:

#### TEXT 1

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos  
Melachim Umilchamoseihem*, 12:1

אל יעלה על הלב שבימות המשיח יבטל דבר ממונהגו של עולם. או יהיה שם חדוש במעשה בראשית. אלא עולם ממונהגו נהג. וזה שנאמר בישעיה "וגר זאב עם כבש ונמר עם גדי ירפץ" (ישעיה יא, ו), משל וחייה... וכן כל פיוצא באלו הדברים בענין המשיח הם משלים.

*Do not presume that in the era of Mashiach any facet of the world's nature will change or that there will be innovations in the work of Creation. Rather, the world will continue according to its natural pattern. Although it is written, "The wolf will dwell with the lamb and the leopard will lie down with the young goat" (Isaiah 11:6), these words*



*are metaphors and parables . . . All similar prophecies about Mashiach are metaphors.*

Rambam goes on to explain that, in this prophecy, the animals of prey represent the nations, and the lambs and goats represent the Jewish people. The prophecy is that formerly hostile nations will live in peace with us.

#### QUESTION

How can Rambam make this statement if he, himself, enshrined our belief in *Techiyas Hamesim* as a fundamental principle of Jewish faith?<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Rambam wrote a lengthy epistle on *Techiyas Hamesim*, to prove that the dead will literally come back to life.<sup>2</sup> In light of this, how could Rambam assert that miracles won't occur in the era of Mashiach? After all, there is no greater change to the natural pattern than the dead returning to life.

#### NATURAL, THEN MIRACULOUS

To answer these questions, the Rebbe introduces a bold idea. Most commentaries approached this Rambam from a binary perspective; either Rambam accepted that there will be miracles, or he didn't. The Rebbe insisted that both of Rambam's statements are equally and forcefully true. Mashiach is not required to perform any miracles,

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<sup>1</sup> *Pirush Hamishnayos L'haRambam*, introduction to Sanhedrin 10. Moreover, Rambam rules (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:6) that one who denies this principle has no share in the World to Come.

<sup>2</sup> The background to this epistle is pertinent: When Rambam wrote that Mashiach will not perform miracles, a controversy erupted in the Jewish world. Many prominent sages, including Ravah and Rabbi Shmuel Ben Eli, a leading *ga'on* (Babylonian scholar) from Baghdad, pilloried him for his apparent rejection of *Techiyas Hamesim*. Rambam responded with a lengthy epistle, to assure his detractors of his belief in *Techiyas Hamesim*. Yet, after all this, Rambam maintains that Mashiach will not perform miracles. How can this be?

yet all the miracles foretold by the prophets and the Talmud about the era of Mashiach will come to pass. How can this be?

The Rebbe explains that Rambam anticipated two stages in the era of Mashiach. In the first stage, there will be no change to the world's natural pattern.<sup>3</sup> In the second stage, all the miracles foretold by our prophets and the Talmud will occur.<sup>4</sup> With this simple but brilliant suggestion, the Rebbe resolves a question that has bothered Torah scholars for generations.<sup>5</sup>

#### QUESTION

Is this a novel suggestion or is there something about Mashiach that compels us to say that there must, and will be, a second stage?

To be clear, the two-stage-doctrine is a masterful way to resolve the contradiction between Rambam's ruling on miracles and Rambam's ruling on *Techiyas Hamesim*. But how did the Rebbe surmise that this will, in fact, be the case?

Moreover, if the dramatic and sweeping changes, that Mashiach will introduce upon his arrival, will only be sufficient to initiate the first stage, what kind of pivotal event will precipitate the second stage?

The Rebbe begins his answer with a Talmudic teaching. The Talmud asks:

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<sup>3</sup> During this stage, Mashiach will introduce universal peace, which will enable all people, Jews in particular, to devote their lives to serving G-d.

<sup>4</sup> The Rebbe differentiates between miracles ascribed to Mashiach himself, and miracles ascribed to the era of Mashiach. As we will soon learn, the Rebbe explains that, in *Mishneh Torah*, Rambam presents Mashiach's basic halachic role, which is to bring about the first stage. The second stage will, indeed, occur, but it isn't part of Mashiach's basic requirements. Therefore, all miracles prophesied about Mashiach himself are understood by Rambam as metaphorical. All prophecies about the era of Mashiach are to be understood literally and will occur in the second stage. Inasmuch as the prophecy about the wolf dwelling with the lamb appears in a chapter that deals almost exclusively with the person of Mashiach, Rambam understands that prophecy as a metaphor.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 2. In the *sichah*, the Rebbe poses many additional questions that arise from this ruling, and they are all answered by this original and insightful proposition.



TEXT 2

Talmud, Sanhedrin 98A

כתיב, "וארו עם ענני שמיא" (דניאל ז, יג) . . . וכתיב, "עני ורוכב על  
חמור", (זכריה ט, ט) ?  
זכו, עם ענני שמיא. לא זכו, עני רוכב על חמור.

*The passage states, [Mashiach] "will arrive with the heavenly clouds" (Daniel 7:13) . . . Yet another passage states that [Mashiach will be] "a poor person riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). [How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction?]*

*If [the Jews] are meritorious, [he will come] with heavenly clouds. If they are not meritorious, [he will be] a poor person riding on a donkey.*

There are two possible formulas for Mashiach's arrival. If we are in an ordinary, non-meritorious state, Mashiach will not perform miracles. If we are in a state of extraordinary merit, the world will be miraculously transformed.

The Rebbe explains that there are two dynamics at play: (A) Mashiach's role, which is to restore the Torah (as we learned in Lesson One), and (B) the miracles, which are not part of Mashiach's default job description. They are added benefits that are offered in reward for our extraordinary merit.

Rambam's no-miracle ruling is based on Mashiach's default role. As a book of halachah, Rambam describes the basic legal role that Mashiach is required to play. Miracles are not part of it, unless unique circumstances—our merits—warrant it.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Rambam rules

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<sup>6</sup> This can be understood on two levels. On a simple level, it means that Mashiach is halachically required to come, but there is no halachic requirement for us to be in a state of extraordinary merit. Hence, Rambam codifies his ruling based on the conditions that are halachically necessary. On a deeper level, even if Mashiach comes when we are in a state of extraordinary merit, performing miracles won't be part of his inherent halachic role. That will be like icing on the cake in reward for our merits. Since Rambam only

that the base criteria for Mashiach, sans the extraordinary conditions, do not include a requirement to perform miracles.<sup>7</sup>

#### FROM ONE TO TWO

The Talmud presents two possibilities. Either Mashiach performs miracles, or he doesn't. It depends on our state of merit. The Rebbe's two-stage doctrine adds a blockbuster idea. It is not a binary, either-or, proposition. It is a timeline, in which one phase leads into the next—even if Mashiach arrives when we are in an ordinary state of merit and doesn't perform miracles, we will transition into a miraculous state. Moreover, the Rebbe did not propose this as a matter of faith, but as a logical necessity. What makes this transition necessary and inevitable?

##### TEXT 3

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 27, pp. 205–206

לאחרי ביאת המשיח, וויבאלד אז אידן וועלן דעמאלט ניט האבן קיין  
נוגש ומבטל . . . ואדרבה, מ'וועט זיין פנויין בתורה ובמצות . . . וואס  
דאס איז די שלימות המצב פון זכו, וועט דאך דאס בריינגען מיט זיך  
בהכרח די צווייטער תקופה.

*The Jews will have no oppressors or disturbances when Mashiach arrives; . . . on the contrary, they will be free to engage fully with Torah and mitzvos . . . Therefore, it follows that they will attain the status of extraordinary merit, which would perforce bring about the second stage.*

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describes Mashiach's halachic role, not the reward for our merits, he limits his discussion to Mashiach's non-miraculous role.

<sup>7</sup> This explains why Rambam speaks of miracles in the era of Mashiach in his non-halachic works, such as *Pirush Hamishnayos* and *Igeres Teiman*. When he doesn't limit himself to Mashiach's role required by halachah, he discusses all the great miracles that Mashiach will eventually perform.



The Rebbe's explanation is simple but brilliant. The offer of miracles in reward for merit doesn't come off the table once Mashiach arrives. It is always available. Thus, even if Mashiach arrives when we lack extraordinary merit, we will quickly accumulate merit and the miracles will follow.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, Rambam is correct that Mashiach will not be expected by default to perform miracles. At the same time, the prophets and the Talmud are equally correct that miracles will certainly occur in the era of Mashiach: either immediately upon his arrival (if we are meritorious) or a little later (when we accumulate merit).

#### SUMMARY

The era of Mashiach is often described as miraculous. The truth is that Mashiach will only perform miracles if the generation is worthy. Otherwise, the world will continue according to its natural pattern. However, once Mashiach brings peace and enables us to study Torah and perform *mitzvos* without distraction, we will become worthy and miracles will follow.

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<sup>8</sup> This is consistent with the concept of *dirah betachtonim*. If the physical world is to be a *keli* for *Elokus*, moreover, flooded by *Elokus* in a manner that only *Elokus* will be visible, "כמים לים מכסים", it cannot be hampered by inefficiencies and limitations. As a seamless continuum of G-dliness, all of earth's systems must flow in perfect harmony and efficiency. In other words, the world must be conducted according to a G-dly, supernatural order, rather than a worldly, natural order. Thus, the cessation of the natural patterns and their limitations is inevitable. See *Sefer Hasichos* 5749:1, pp. 150–151.



## II. HERO OR VILLAIN

### BAR KUZIBA—THE SAVIOR

To buttress his position that Mashiach is not required to perform miracles, Rambam cites the story of Bar Kuziba.

In 3887 (127 BCE), nearly six decades after the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash, Israel was under Roman occupation. Rome instituted a series of oppressive decrees against the Jews, which embittered many Jews. A young warrior, Shimon Bar Kuziba, raised an army and led a rebellion against Rome.<sup>9</sup> At first, he was spectacularly successful; he drove the Roman forces out of the country and established a Jewish kingdom in Israel. However, Rome eventually defeated his army and put down the rebellion.

In the early days of this rebellion, *Chazal* thought of Bar Kuziba as Mashiach.

#### TEXT 4

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim Umilchamoseihem*, 11:3

שְׁהָרִי רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא חָכָם גְּדוֹל מִחֲכָמֵי מְשֻׁנָּה הָיָה. וְהוּא הָיָה נוֹשֵׂא כְּלָיו  
שֶׁל בֶּן כּוֹזִיבָא הַמֶּלֶךְ. וְהוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר עָלָיו שֶׁהוּא הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ. וְדָמָה  
הוּא וְכָל חֲכָמֵי דוֹרוֹ שֶׁהוּא הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ. עַד שֶׁנִּהְרַג בְּעֹנוֹת. כִּי  
שֶׁנִּהְרַג נֹדַע לָהֶם שֶׁאֵינוֹ. וְלֹא שָׁאֲלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ חֲכָמִים לֹא אוֹת וְלֹא מוֹפְתִים.

*Proof can be brought from the fact that Rabbi Akiva, one of the great sages of the Mishnah, served as arms bearer for King Bar Kuziba and declared him King Mashiach. He and all the sages of his time viewed*

#### Arms Bearing

Rabbi Akiva served as arms bearer for Bar Kuziba. It is usually forbidden for a Torah sage to perform such menial tasks, yet Rabbi Akiva felt comfortable placing himself at Bar Kuziba's service for two reasons: (A) He believed that Bar Kuziba was King Mashiach and it is permissible to serve as a king's arms bearer. He learned this from David Hamelech, who was also a Torah sage, and who served as Shaul Hamelech's arms bearer (II Shmuel 16:21). (B) This was a dangerous time for Jews and when Jewish lives are at stake, we don't stand on ceremony.

*Likutei Sichos* 27, p. 199.

<sup>9</sup> His original name was Shimon son of Kuziba. When Rabbi Akiva declared him Mashiach, he invoked the passage that we explored in Lesson Two, "A star arose from Yakov" (Bamidbar 24:17). After that, he was known as Bar Kochba from the word *kochav*—star.



him as the King Mashiach until he was killed for his sins. After he was killed, they realized that he was not the Mashiach. But they never asked him to perform signs or wonders.

#### BAR KUZIBA—THE CHARLATAN

On the face of it, this story, sourced in two Talmudic sources,<sup>10</sup> proves Rambam's contention. Although Bar Kuziba's sins eventually proved that he was not Mashiach, his inability to perform miracles did not prevent the sages from presuming that he was Mashiach. This proves that performing miracles is not a litmus test for Mashiach's authenticity.

However, there is more than one version of this story. Let's explore another version:

##### TEXT 5

Talmud, Sanhedrin, 93B

בר כוזיבא מלך תרתין שנין ופלגא. אמר להו לרבנן, "אנא משיח." אמרו ליה, "במשיח כתיב דמורח ודאין, נחזי אנן אי מורח ודאין." כיון דחזוהו דלא מורח ודאין, קטלוהו.

*Bar Kuziba ruled for two and a half years. He proclaimed to the sages, "I am the Mashiach." They replied, "It is written that Mashiach can smell [a person] and judge [his virtue based on the smell test]. Let us see if you can smell and judge."<sup>11</sup> When they saw that he was unable, they executed him.*

<sup>10</sup> Talmud Yerushalmi, Taanis 4:5; Eichah *Rabah* 2:4.

<sup>11</sup> On a literal level, this means that Mashiach will not require testimony and witnesses. He will be able to sniff out the truth by taking in the scent of the defendant. On a deeper level, it means that Mashiach will take the internal measure of defendants and understand precisely what led them to sin. Rather than rebuke them harshly, Mashiach will highlight their strengths and nurse them back to proper conduct (*Likutei Diburim* 2, pp. 317a-322a). On the highest level, kabbalah teaches that scent is synonymous with *taanug*. When Mashiach engages us through scent, he will activate the highest dimension

## THE CONFLICTS

This version conflicts with the version cited by Rambam on three counts.

1. Is Mashiach expected to perform miracles (such as the smell test), or not?
2. Did the sages ask Bar Kuziba to perform a miracle (the smell test), or not?<sup>12</sup>
3. Did Bar Kuziba die in battle because of his sins, or did the sages execute him?

The first point—whether Mashiach is expected to perform miracles—is relatively easy to reconcile. It is not difficult to suppose that these versions were written by different sages, who disagreed over this point.

But the other two questions are much more difficult to reconcile. Our sages tended to argue over ideas, not facts.<sup>13</sup> So, how do we reconcile these conflicting narratives?<sup>14</sup>

The Rebbe explains that these versions are not in conflict. Each tells the story from a different perspective. One describes the experience of Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues. The other describes the experience of the dissenting group.<sup>15</sup>

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of our *neshamah* and draw down the highest dimension of *Elokus* (*Maamarei Admur Hazaken* 5568:1, pp. 366–370).

<sup>12</sup> In fact, Ravad, who disagrees with Rambam and holds that Mashiach is expected to perform miracles, cites Sanhedrin, 93B in support of his position.

<sup>13</sup> This is because we assume that they would have determined the correct facts rather than argue (Talmud Yerushalmi, Pesachim 2:4). Also, because one can't apply the dictum, "אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים", to a dispute over facts (Rashi, Kesubos 57a).

<sup>14</sup> Many historians concluded that his death was shrouded in mystery, and even *Chazal* were unable to determine the precise circumstances. Never willing to accept that *Chazal* were unable to establish facts, the Rebbe labored over this question and found a brilliant method of reconciling the two versions.

<sup>15</sup> This is based on *Likutei Sichos* 27, pp. 199–200.



## THERE WAS A DISPUTE

On the question of whether there was a dispute about Bar Kuziba's status, the Rebbe says that both versions agree that not all sages agreed with Rabbi Akiva.<sup>16</sup> Although Rambam wrote that all supported Bar Kuziba, he meant that they were all in agreement initially. However, at a later stage, some changed their minds and concluded that Mashiach must perform miracles.<sup>17</sup>

The group that changed its mind subjected Bar Kuziba to a smell test. Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues, who didn't consider miracle performance a litmus test for Mashiach, didn't participate in this test. Therefore, Rambam, who rules according to Rabbi Akiva, doesn't mention the smell test.

## WHO KILLED HIM?

With respect to how Bar Kuziba died, the Rebbe suggests that both versions agree that *Chazal* did not execute him. Rather, he died in battle.<sup>18</sup> The disagreement is only about whether the sages sentenced him to death before the battle.

The fact is that at this point in history, *Chazal* lacked the authority to execute sinners. They could pronounce death sentences, but they could not carry them out. Accordingly, the sages could not have executed Bar Kuziba. All they could do was sentence him to death.

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<sup>16</sup> In fact, *Eichah Rabah* 2:4 and Talmud Yerushalmi, Taanis 4:5, the two Talmudic sources of Rambam's version of the story, explicitly state that Bar Kuziba's status as Mashiach was a matter of dispute among *Chazal*. They both relate that Rabbi Yochanan Ben Torasa sent word to Rabbi Akiva saying, "Akiva, grass will grow on your cheeks before Mashiach will arrive." Rambam's statement that all the sages were in agreement can't be taken literally, because Rambam would have been aware of this dissent.

<sup>17</sup> The Rebbe offers two alternate explanations: Rambam said all the sages agreed, but he meant most of the sages agreed. (The concept of *rubo kekulo*—most of an item is halachically equal to the entire item, is well established in halachah.) The other explanation is that all the leading rabbis of the day agreed with Rabbi Akiva. The dissent came from junior rabbis.

<sup>18</sup> *Eichah Rabah* 2:4 and Talmud Yerushalmi Taanis 4:5 relate that Bar Kuziba was killed (during the battle) by a poisonous snake and that Hadrian proclaimed that had the snake not killed this warrior, no human hand could have slain him.

The version in Text Five tells the story of the dissenting sages who believed Bar Kuziba to be a false Mashiach. These sages pronounced his death sentence before he went to battle. Rambam's version tells the story of Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues, who did not sentence Bar Kuziba to death.

Those who sentenced him to death did so because he led his soldiers into a battle that he was certain to lose. Had he been the Mashiach, he would presumably have won, but as a false Mashiach, he was certain to lose against Rome's superior might. He had no right to jeopardize the lives of his soldiers in battle. Therefore, his insistence on doing so earned him the status of *Rodef*—a pursuer with intent to kill his soldiers. Halachah rules that a *Rodef's* life is forfeit, and any bystander must kill the pursuer to save the pursued. Accordingly, these sages declared Bar Kuziba's life forfeit and he subsequently died in battle.<sup>19</sup>

The sages who believed that Mashiach is not required to perform miracles, believed that Bar Kuziba was the Mashiach and presumed that he would emerge triumphant. Accordingly, they didn't view him as a pursuer and concluded that he died because of his personal sins.<sup>20</sup> He was a valid candidate to be Mashiach, but his personal failings prevented him from fulfilling his destiny.

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<sup>19</sup> This version traces Bar Kuziba's death back to the sages because once he was sentenced, his life became forfeit. In Talmudic parlance, *gavra ketila katalit*, the Romans killed a dead man.

<sup>20</sup> *Eichah Rabah* 2:4 and Talmud Yerushalmi, Taanis 4:5 record three sins: (A) Bar Kuziba required his soldiers to amputate one of their fingers to prove their courage. The sages disproved of this. (B) Before going into battle, Bar Kuziba would pray that Hashem remain neutral and help neither the Jews nor the Romans. He assumed he would win without divine assistance—a rejection of the divine mastery. (C) He murdered Rabbi Elazar Hamodai, an elderly sage, without due process, on a suspicion of treason that proved false.

## CONCLUSION

In Rabbi Akiva's day, *Chazal* were in dispute over whether Mashiach is expected to perform miracles.<sup>21</sup> However, once Rambam ruled in accordance with Rabbi Akiva, the halachah is clear that Mashiach is not expected to perform miracles (unless the generation is in possession of extraordinary merit).<sup>22</sup>

## SUMMARY

Most of our sages agreed with Rabbi Akiva that Bar Kuziba was Mashiach, though he failed to perform miracles. When he died in war, Rabbi Akiva and his friends concluded that his personal failings prevented him from realizing his destiny. The other sages concluded that he was killed for endangering the Jews as a false Mashiach. Rambam rules in accordance with Rabbi Akiva and infers from this story that Mashiach is not required to perform miracles.

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<sup>21</sup> Moreover, as we mentioned earlier, this dispute continued into the Rambam's era when Ravad argued with Rambam.

<sup>22</sup> This is based on the Rebbe's oft repeated contention that since Rambam was the only major *posek* to codify *hilchos* Mashiach, the halachah is always in accordance with the Rambam in this area.

### III. CALCULATING THE END

#### DON'T CALCULATE

Learning about Mashiach naturally stimulates excitement and anticipation. Such excitement can lead us to offer predictions about the timing of his arrival. In this vein, Rambam inserts a cautionary note:

##### TEXT 6

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim Umlchamoseihem*, 12:2

לא יחשב הקצין. אמרו חכמים, "תפח רוּחם של מחשבי הקצים" (סנהדרין צז ב). אלא יחכה ויאמין בכלל הדבר.

*One should not try to determine the appointed time for Mashiach's coming. Our Sages declared: "May the spirits of those who determine the time of Mashiach's coming expire" (Sanhedrin 97b). Rather, one should await and believe in Mashiach without specifying a date.*

Elsewhere, Rambam explains that such calculations are damaging because if Mashiach fails to arrive by the time we calculate, it can lead to disappointment and devastation. Thus, our sages prayed for those who attempt such calculations to lose their understanding and grow confused.<sup>23</sup>

This leads us to wonder why many great rabbis and Jewish leaders engaged in precisely such calculations.<sup>24</sup>

The Rebbe explained:

<sup>23</sup> *Igeres Teiman* chapter 3.

<sup>24</sup> See following footnote. See also *Toras Shalom*, p. 237; *Sefer Hamaamarim* 5666, p. 688.

#### When Least Expected

*Chazal* say that Mashiach will come when he is least expected (Sanhedrin 97a). This can't mean that we should stop expecting Mashiach, because we are obligated to await and expect him. Rather it means that when we reach such a deep state of *Galus* that we can't imagine how Mashiach might come, we must believe regardless, with a faith that transcends logic. When we reach deep and find this faith, Mashiach will come.

*Likutei Sichos* 10, p. 171.



TEXT 7

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 29, p. 16

וויבאלד אז צדיקים זעען בכל זמן משך הגלות ווי די עבודה בכל יום ורגע פון גלות איז כולל אין זיך און בריינגט עניני הגאולה. און נאך יעדער טאג וכו' אין גלות זעען זיי די הוספה בהגילויים ועליות פון דער גאולה, ביז אז די הוספות קלייבן זיך צוזאמען און עס קומט א מצב פון שלימות בההוספה. האבן זיי מגלה געווען זמן השלימות, שנת הקץ, אז מ'האלט אין דער גרייכן און צוקומען צו די שלימות פון דער הוספה, פון דעם העכערען גילוי. ובמילא דארף די עבודה פון בני ישראל, אין דעם זמן צווישן דעם מגלה זיין דעם קץ און דעם יום הקץ, זיין בהתאם לשלימות הגילוי הזה, אז דאס זאל קומען על ידי עבודתם בפועל.

*Righteous people perceive verily that the daily efforts Jews make during Galus, gradually introduces the Ge'ulah. They can measure our daily progress, which enables them to project precisely when the task will be completed. They revealed the end-date to inform us that we are inching closer to the time of supernal revelation. Their intent was to inspire us to do our utmost to fulfill our daily quota so that Mashiach will arrive on time.*

Rambam spoke negatively of those who reveal the end-day as a lark because if their calculations are mistaken, it can disappoint the people and postpone Mashiach's arrival. The sages who engaged in such calculations, did so for the very opposite reason. They expected that knowing how much progress we have made, and how close we have arrived, would inspire the people to maintain, if not accelerate, their pace.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> In *Igeres Teiman*, chapter 3, Rambam explains that Reb Sadyah Ga'on engaged in such calculations (*Emunos Vade'os* 8:3) because Jews in his time were so dejected and confused that he felt it necessary to uplift them. Based on this, the Rebbe explains, in this *sichah*, why Rambam provided his own calculation after explaining that it is wrong to present calculations. Rambam was speaking of calculations made as a lark, but his own calculation was intended to inspire and to uplift the Jews of Yemen.



## THE TIME HAS ARRIVED

Something special occurred in 1941. The Frierdiker Rebbe declared that we had entered the era of Mashiach and all that is required of us is *teshuvah*.<sup>26</sup> This was different. It was not a calculation. It was an affirmation that we have transitioned into the era of Mashiach, which means that he could come at any moment.<sup>27</sup> At this point, the focus on Mashiach shifted into high gear and the excitement gradually increased as we continued to inch closer.

Approximately fifty years later, the Rebbe declared:

### TEXT 8

The Rebbe, *Sefer Hasichos*, 5752, p. 97

דער חידוש אין דער עבודת השליחות וואס איז צוגעקומען במיוחד  
בזמן האחרון: לקבל פני משיח צדקינו בגאולה האמיתית והשלימה.

*A new dimension was introduced to our work in the recent past: To greet Mashiach Tzidkeinu in the true and complete Redemption.*

The Rebbe declared that we had completed the previous Rebbe's directive; we have repented and Mashiach is ready to come.<sup>28</sup> We no longer need to focus on bringing Mashiach closer; we need to prepare ourselves to greet him.<sup>29</sup> As we discussed last week, such preparation

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<sup>26</sup> The Frierdiker Rebbe's utilized the parable of a jacket. He declared that the jacket is complete, the buttons have been affixed all that is left to do is polish the buttons. See *Sefer Hasichos* 5689, p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> *Sefer Hasichos* 5748:2, p. 628.

<sup>28</sup> See *Toras Menachem* 5751:4, pp. 38–39. We can suggest that this means that we are in a state of extraordinary merit.

<sup>29</sup> For most of the Rebbe's *nesi'us*, the Rebbe would repeat the clarion call to polish the buttons. On Shabbos *Parshas Vayechi* 5747 (*Likutei Sichos* 25, p. 481), the Rebbe said that there might be a button or two left to polish. The next Shabbos (*Toras Menachem* 5747:2, p. 301), the Rebbe declared that the buttons have all been polished. After that, the Rebbe repeated this declaration many times.

includes learning about Mashiach, thinking about Mashiach, and behaving as one would behave in the era of Mashiach.

Several decades have since passed, and today, we are more ready than ever. We need to hone our enthusiasm and preparedness because the time for his coming is literally at hand.

Let's sharpen our focus, fine-tune our excitement, and ensure that we will be in a state of extraordinary merit when he arrives. At that point, we will open our eyes, point to him, and say, "*Hineh, hineh, Mashiach ba.*"

## SUMMARY

It is forbidden to calculate the timing of Mashiach's arrival, as a lark, but doing so to inspire Jews to increase in *mitzvos* is permissible. In our generation, these calculations are no longer necessary for we have entered the era of Mashiach.

## KEY POINTS

1. There will be two stages when Mashiach comes: During the first, the world will continue according to its natural pattern. The second stage will be a miraculous time.
2. It is not necessary for Mashiach to perform miracles.
3. This is why Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues accepted Bar Kuziba as Mashiach.
4. Calculating when Mashiach will come, as a lark, is forbidden. However, doing so to inspire Jews to greater mitzvah observance is a good thing.
5. We have entered the final stages of *Galus* and the beginning of the Mashiach era.



