

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



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A VISION *for* MASHIACH

THE REBBE AND THE RAMBAM



LESSON 1
The Ultimate Restoration

I. WHAT WILL HE DO?

LEARNING EXERCISE

Why do you look forward to Mashiach?

Freedom, prosperity, and wellness?

Divine revelation?

Meeting loved ones?

Meeting the greats from our past?

The opportunity to do mitzvos unavailable in Galus?

INTRODUCTION

The Rambam dedicated the final two chapters of *Mishneh Torah* to the *halachos* of *yemos haMashiach*, the messianic era. These are chapters eleven and twelve of *Hilchos Melachim Umilchamoseihem*—the Laws of Kings and their Wars. He was the first to organize these laws and to present them in systematic fashion so that Mashiach can be studied as a complete subject.

Considering the Rebbe's zeal and life-long focus on Mashiach, it is not surprising that the Rebbe devoted a great deal of time to analyzing, dissecting, and deepening our understanding of these two chapters of Rambam.¹ The Rebbe's methodology and depth consistently reveal original perspectives and surprising angles that don't occur to us at first glance. When we learn the Rambam under the Rebbe's treatment, the Rambam often emerges in an entirely new light.

Let's begin by reading Rambam's first statement in this chapter:



For the Sake of Israel

Rambam rules that the Beis Hamikdash will be built before the ingathering of the exiles. Building the Beis Hamikdash first will elevate the state of the Jews when they will arrive in Israel. Building the Beis Hamikdash later would elevate the state of the Beis Hamikdash because it would be built by all the Jewish people. Here we see that to benefit the Jew, G-d is prepared to compromise on the Beis Hamikdash because G-d treasures the Jew even above the Beis Hamikdash.

Toras Menachem 5743:1, pp. 519–520

TEXT 1

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

הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ עֵתִיד לַעֲמֹד וּלְהַחְזִיר מַלְכוּת דָּוִד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפָּחָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה. וּבִזְמַן הַמְּקֻדָּשׁ וּמְקַבֵּץ נְדָחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְחֹזְרִין כָּל הַמְּשֻׁפְּטִים בְּמִיּוֹ כְּשֶׁהֵיוּ מְקֻדָּם. מְקַרְבִּין קְרָבָנוֹת. וְעוֹשִׂין שְׂמִטִּין וְיֹבְלוֹת כְּכֹל מִצְוֹתוֹ הָאֲמוּרָה בַּתּוֹרָה.

וְכָל מִי שֶׁאִינוֹ מְאֱמִין בּוֹ. אוֹ מִי שֶׁאִינוֹ מְחַכֶּה לְבִיאָתוֹ. לֹא בִשְׂאָר נְבִיאִים בְּלִבָּד הוּא כּוֹפֵר. אֲלֵא בַּתּוֹרָה וּבְמִשְׁנֵי רַבֵּנּוּ. שֶׁהֵרִי הַתּוֹרָה הַעֲיֵדָה עָלָיו שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וְיָשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתְךָ וְרַחֲמֶךָ וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצָךָ" "אִם יְהִי נְדָחְךָ בְּקִצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם" וְגו', וְהִבִּיאָךָ ה'" (דברים ל, ד-ה). וְאֵלּוּ הַדְּבָרִים הַמְּכַרְשִׁים בַּתּוֹרָה הֵם כּוֹלְלִים כָּל הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁנֶּאֱמָרוּ עַל יְדֵי כָּל הַנְּבִיאִים. אֵף בְּפָרְשַׁת בְּלָעַם נֶאֱמַר וְשָׁם נִבְּא בְּשֵׁנֵי הַמְּשִׁיחִים. בְּמִשְׁיחַ הָרִאשׁוֹן שֶׁהוּא דָּוִד שֶׁהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד צָרִיהֶם. וּבְמִשְׁיחַ הָאַחֲרוֹן שֶׁעוֹמֵד מִבְּנֵי שְׁמוֹשֵׁי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל [בְּאַחֲרוֹנָה].

In the future, the messianic king will arise and renew the Davidic dynasty, restoring it to its initial sovereignty. He will build the Beis Hamikdash and gather the dispersed of Israel. In his days, the observance of all the statutes will return to their previous state. We will offer sacrifices, observe the shemittah and yovel years according to all the instructions delineated in the Torah.

One who does not believe in him, or does not await his coming, denies not only the statements of the other prophets, but also denies the Torah and denies Moshe, our teacher. This is evidenced by the Torah's testimony to his coming, "G-d will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you. He will again gather you from among the nations. . . . Even if your Diaspora is at the ends of the heavens, G-d will gather you up from there . . . and bring you to the Land" (Deuteronomy 30:3–5). These explicit words of the Torah include all the statements made by all the prophets.



Reference to Mashiach is also made in the portion of Bilam, who prophesied about two anointed kings: the first anointed, King David, who saved Israel from her oppressors; and the final anointed king who will arise from [David's] descendants and save Israel in the end of days.

THE HALACHIC RELEVANCE

The Rambam begins his treatment of Mashiach by describing his role. To the casual reader it appears that the Rambam's intent is to offer a general introduction to the subject. Before discussing the specifics, Rambam tells us what Mashiach is about. The Rebbe's approach is that every word in the Rambam has halachic relevance. There are no throwaway lines. No story is brought just for the sake of storytelling:

TEXT 2

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 18, p. 277

דער רמב"ם איז מפרש אין פרק יא פון הלכות מלכים ניט בלויז
די זאך פון ביאת המשיח און דעם חיוב להאמין בו, נאר אויך וואס
עס איז ענינו, גדרו, ופעולתו, און אופן התגלותו. ובמילא אין וואס
עס באשטייט דער חיוב להאמין בו . . . דאס איז ניט נאר א סיפור
דברים וואס משיח וועט טאן און וואס ס'וועט זיין בימיו, נאר דאס
איז א הלכה.

In chapter eleven of the Laws of Kings, Rambam doesn't merely tell us that Mashiach will come and that we must believe it. He also presents the concept, definition, function, and the process by which Mashiach will be revealed, thereby establishing the parameters of our belief about Mashiach . . . This is not just a story about what Mashiach will do and what will occur in the era of Mashiach. This is a point of halachah.



Throughout these two chapters, Rambam explains what we can expect Mashiach to do and what we can't expect from him. What will occur in the era of Mashiach, and in what order. This is not just for the sake of storytelling. This is a book of halachah, and as such, Rambam tells us what Mashiach is expected to do, according to halachah, and what he is not expected to do. This will enable us to determine Mashiach's authenticity. Even Mashiach will be bound by his halachic role. If he fulfills it, we will know he is Mashiach. If he fails to fulfill it, we will know he is an imposter.

Moreover, this halachah is relevant even before Mashiach arrives. It is a mitzvah to believe in and to await the coming of Mashiach. A mitzvah can't be ambiguous. If we are to believe, we need to know specifically what to believe. If we are to await, we need to know precisely what we are waiting for. Thus, these descriptors have halachic significance. They inform our faith in and our anticipation of Mashiach.

SUMMARY

The description of Mashiach's role has halachic significance:

1. It gives us concrete items by which to determine the legitimacy of any prospective Mashiach.
2. It informs about the specifics of our faith in and anticipation of Mashiach.



II. HIS PRIMARY ROLE

FOUR DESCRIPTORS

In Text 1, we read that Mashiach will:

1. Restore the Davidic kingdom
2. Build the Beis Hamikdash
3. Bring about the ingathering of the Jewish people
4. Restore all the *mitzvos* that can't be fulfilled in the Diaspora.²

The casual reader might reasonably conclude that the first three points are Mashiach's primary goals, and the last point merely derives from the former points. In other words, Mashiach's primary role is to bring relief to the Jewish people and to restore our former glory.

The Rebbe reads the Rambam differently. The Rebbe asserts that Mashiach's entire purpose is not to restore our glory, but to restore the Torah's glory. The first three points are merely precursors, or necessary conditions, to make the final point possible.

MASHIACH: THE CULMINATION OF JUDAISM

The Rebbe arrives at this conclusion through a comprehensive analysis that is as astounding as it is simple, and as deep as it is obvious. And in his inimitable style, the Rebbe begins with a holistic treatment of the entire subject.

Two questions:

1. Why is this section, the Laws of Kings, the last section of the *Mishneh Torah*?
2. Why are the laws about Mashiach not only in the last section of the *Mishneh Torah*, but also within the very last chapters of this section?

Detailed Analysis

The Rambam presents three concrete restoration goals and three mitzvah-oriented restoration goals. Mashiach will restore (a) the Davidic monarchy, (b) the Beis Hamikdash, and (c) the Jewish presence in Israel. With each of these steps he will restore one of the following sets of *mitzvos*: (a) all the statutes that had been interrupted, (b) the sacrificial rite, and (c) *shemita* and *yovel*, which require the presence of most Jews in Israel (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Shemita Veyovelin* 12:16).

Likutei Sichos 18, pp. 277–278.



The second question is easy to answer. Since Mashiach will only come at the end of time, it makes sense to place the *halachos* about him at the end of the book. But the first question is more difficult to answer. Why are the laws about Jewish kings, a primary aspect of Jewish life, placed at the end of the book? Moreover, in the opening passage of this section, Rambam writes that the obligation to appoint a king became binding when the Jews entered Israel. If this was among the first *mitzvos* that Jews encountered in Israel, why is it the very last section of the book?³

The Rebbe's answer is incisive and refreshing.

The last page of a book is not the least important page. It is the culminating page. Every word in the book, every chapter of the book, must flourish and come to fruition in its final page. Accordingly, the end of a book that encapsulates the corpus of Torah is the culmination of the entire Torah.

Having presented every mitzvah in the Torah, the Rambam concludes with the conditions that are necessary to fulfill these *mitzvos*. Some of these *mitzvos* can be fulfilled in all places and at all times. But some can only be performed by those who live in Israel.⁴ Others only take effect when all, or at least most, Jews live in Israel.⁵ Many require the presence of the Beis Hamikdash.⁶

After the Jews entered Israel, they were unable to fulfill many of these *mitzvos* for nearly four hundred years. This is because they didn't have a Beis Hamikdash, they were repeatedly harassed and attacked by neighboring nations, and were therefore, unable to settle down fully. It was only after G-d appointed the first permanent Jewish king, David, that the necessary conditions were achieved to

³ Building a Beis Hamikdash was another obligation that became binding with their entry into Israel. Yet, Rambam enumerates the laws about the Beis Hamikdash much earlier than the laws about kings.

⁴ Such as *terumah* and *maaser*.

⁵ Such as *shemita* (according to Rambam—*Hilchos Shemita Veyovlin* 12:16) and *yovel*.

⁶ Such as *korbanos*, *tumah* and *taharah*, *Sanhedrin*, *semichah*, etc.



fulfill all the *mitzvos*.⁷ In fact, this is the true role of a Jewish king: to create the optimal conditions for mitzvah observance.⁸ Inasmuch as having a king was a necessary ingredient for the fulfillment of all the *mitzvos* in the Rambam's book, these laws appear as the final section of the book.

This explains why the Laws of Kings is the last section of the book. Why are the laws about Mashiach in *the final chapters* of this section?

TEXT 3

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 18 p. 278

די אלע ענינים וואס האבן געפעלט אין קיום תורה ומצוות מצד דעם וואס עס האט געפעלט אין שלימות כל ישראל ובית המקדש, וואס דאס איז כללות ענין הגלות, ווערט נשלם דורך משיח'ן. און אין דעם באשטייט וואס משיח איז מחזיר מלכות דוד ליושנה כו', וחוזרין כל המשפטים. ער ברענגט צוריק די שלימות הלכות ומצות התורה.

The primary impact of Galus is our inability to fulfill all the Torah's precepts because we lack the Beis Hamikdash and because the Jewish people are not present in Israel. Mashiach's role is to correct this. He will restore the Davidic kingdom in order to restore the Torah and all its precepts.

As the restorer and successor of the Davidic kingdom, Mashiach will restore all that David Hamelech achieved. He will rebuild the Beis Hamikdash and return all Jews to Israel. But all this will be the means to his primary purpose. They will create the necessary conditions for his main function—the complete restoration of the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

Rambam wrote his book in *Galus* when, as we outlined, many of the *mitzvos* were not practicable. He placed the laws about Mashiach at the very end of this section because Mashiach's primary role will be to restore what the first Jewish king established—the optimal conditions for mitzvah observance.

The Necessary Proof

This is precisely why Mashiach is not required to perform miracles to prove himself. He is authenticated by achieving his goal. Since his primary goal is to restore the Torah, he proves himself by doing just that. Everything else is irrelevant. Similarly, prophets are authenticated by foretelling the future accurately, not by performing miracles. The prophet's role is to prophesy, not to perform miracles. Hence the method of authentication entails prophecy. Everything else is irrelevant.

Likutei Sichos 18, pp. 280–281



On the basis of this comprehensive treatment, the Rebbe concludes that, of the four descriptors that the Rambam provided of Mashiach's role, the fourth one was primary. Mashiach will come not so much because we need him to redeem us, or to restore our land, our independence, or our prosperity. Mashiach will come because moving forward without being able to observe these *mitzvos* is inconceivable.

That is why Jews have anticipated his arrival for so many years. That is why Jews have always been desperate for Mashiach. That is why G-d can't wait to send Him.

THE PROOF

In this context, the Rebbe lends new understanding to the Rambam's intention when he cites the following proofs about Mashiach's arrival:

TEXT 4

Rambam, Ibid.

שְׁהָרִי הַתּוֹרָה הַעֲיֵדָה עָלָיו שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וְשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתְךָ וְרַחֲמֶךָ וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצֶךָ . . . אִם יְהִיֶה נִדְחָךְ בְּקִצְהָ הַשָּׁמַיִם . . . וְהִבִּיאֶךָ ה'" (דברים ל, ד-ה)

. . . . אַף בְּפִרְשֵׁת בְּלָעַם נֶאֱמַר וְשָׁם נִבְּא בְּשֵׁנֵי הַמְּשִׁיחִים. בְּמִשִּׁיחַ הָרִאשׁוֹן שֶׁהוּא דָּוִד שֶׁהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד צָרֵיהֶם. וּבְמִשִּׁיחַ הָאַחֲרֹן שֶׁעֹמֵד מִבְּנֵי שְׁמוֹשֵׁי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל [בְּאַחֲרוֹנָה].

For the Torah testifies to his coming, "G-d will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you. He will again gather you from among the nations. . . . Even if your Diaspora is at the ends of the heavens, G-d will gather you up from there . . . and bring you to the Land" (Deuteronomy 30:3–5).

. . . Reference to Mashiach is also made in the portion of Bilam, who prophesied about two anointed kings: the first anointed king, David, who saved Israel from her oppressors; and the final anointed king who

Out of Order

The two proofs appear out of order. The first one is from *Chumash* Devarim and the second one is from *Chumash* Bamidbar.

However, upon closer analysis we see that they are presented in ascending order. The first speaks of *Ge'ulah* as a liberation from *Galus*. The second (which doesn't mention *Galus*) describes the inherent benefits of *Ge'ulah*, not merely as it contrasts with the darkness of *Galus*.

Sefer Hasichos 5751:2, p. 688



will arise from among [David's] descendants and save Israel in the end of days.

A casual reader would assume that the Rambam is focused on the first and third descriptors of Mashiach's role—restoring the Davidic monarchy and ingathering the Jewish exile. Yet, the Rebbe remains focused exclusively on the fourth goal—restoring the *mitzvos* that are denied to us in *Galus*. The Rebbe continues to see all the other goals as means to this end.

There are two sets of passages referenced here.

1. The Jewish people will return to Israel.
2. As a king, Mashiach will pick up where David Hamelech left off.

We explained earlier that in *Galus*, some *mitzvos* are denied to us because we don't live in Israel, and others are denied to us because we don't have a Beis Hamikdash. These two sets of passages provide proof that Mashiach will restore both sets of *mitzvos*.

The first set testifies that we will one day return to Israel, which will allow us to restore the *mitzvos* that require us to live in Israel.

The second set testifies that Mashiach will be a king. Just like David Hamelech did, Mashiach will vanquish our enemies and rebuild the Beis Hamikdash,⁹ which will restore all the other *mitzvos* that are denied to us today in *Galus*.¹⁰

⁹ See *Likutei Sichos* 16, p. 304, footnote 49, which suggests that, though the second Beis Hamikdash was built without a king, it was an exception because it was built as a continuation of the first Beis Hamikdash. Otherwise, a Jewish king is necessary to build the Beis Hamikdash. Hence, the first Beis Hamikdash was built by Shlomo Hamelech and the last Beis Hamikdash will be built by the *melech HaMashiach*.

¹⁰ In addition to the underlying role of all Jewish kings to enhance and deepen the nation's faith in and relationship with G-d. See *Sefer Hamitzvos, Mitzvos Aseh* 273. See also *Hilchos Melachim Umilchamoseihem* 4:10.



SUMMARY

Mashiach's primary role will be to restore the *mitzvos* that are denied to us in *Galus*.



III. THE TORAH DEMANDS IT

Once we understand Mashiach's primary role, we can understand why Rambam inserts the following lines:

TEXT 5

Rambam, Ibid.

וְכֹל מִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ מֵאֱמִין בּוֹ. אִזְ מִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ מְחַכֶּה לְבִיאָתוֹ. לֹא בִשְׂאֵר נְבִיאִים
בְּלִבָּד הוּא כּוֹפֵר. אֶלָּא בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִשְׁה רַבֵּנוּ.

Anyone who does not believe in him or does not await his coming denies not only the statements of the other prophets, but denies the Torah and denies Moshe, our teacher.

At first glance these words are superfluous and out of context. If Rambam merely wants to define the role of Mashiach, why does he veer into discussing the severity of denying Mashiach? It would be sufficient if he told us that we are required to believe in him without mentioning that denying Mashiach equates with denying the Torah.¹¹

The Rebbe teaches that these words play directly into Rambam's primary point. Rambam wants us to know that restoring the Torah to its original glory is Mashiach's primary purpose. With these words Rambam tells us that if the Torah is not restored, it is as if the Torah has been reversed.

Did you know that only two hundred and seventy out of the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos* are practicable in the Diaspora?¹² So

¹² This is based on מגילת סתרים, quoted by the *Shalah* in his שבתבב. He writes that of the 613 *mitzvos*, 126 *mitzvos aseh* and 243 *mitzvos lo saase* apply in *Galus*. In total, that is 369. The *siman* for this is *Shir Hashirim* 5:2, "אני ישנה ולבי"



what does this mean for the Torah? Does it mean that more than half of the Torah was erased when we were exiled from Israel? Can the Torah be erased? Is that even possible if we believe that the Torah is eternal?

The very notion of an eternal Torah demands—nay, *requires*—a positive reversal of our fortune so that the Torah can be restored to its full grandeur.¹³ Thus, concludes the Rambam, if you deny the coming of Mashiach, you're not just denying a prophecy. You're fundamentally denying the Torah itself. You are really saying that more than half of the Torah has been permanently erased.¹⁴ Such denial is theologically impossible. If you deny the coming of Mashiach, you may as well deny the entire Torah.¹⁵

Mashiach: A Fundamental Principle

Belief in Mashiach is one of the fundamental principles of Jewish faith. This is not only due to the centrality of Mashiach to Judaism, but also to Mashiach's role as restorer of the Torah's precepts. Without Mashiach, the Torah—the central pillar of Judaism, is compromised.

Likutei Sichos 18, p. 280

ער.” The word ישנה (plus the four letters of the word) is a *gematriya* of 369. He then reduces the number further to a total of 270. Of the *mitzvos aseh*, explains the *Shalah*, only 48 are universally binding. This is because many *mitzvos* are only binding on those who encounter the obligation. For example, מניקה is only binding on those who own a home. Of the *mitzvos lo saaseh*, only 222 *mitzvos* are universally binding. If you calculate all the universally binding *mitzvos*, you arrive at 270. A *siman* for this is in the same *pasuk*, “אני ישנה ולבי ער.” The word ער has a *gematriya* of 270. However, in his *Sefer Mitzvah Katser*, the *Chafets Chayim* counts 77 *mitzvos aseh* (כמנין בהם) and 194 *Mitzvos lo saaseh* (כמנין צדק) for a total of 271.

¹³ So long as these missing *mitzvos* will be restored, the fact of their temporary absence doesn't contradict their eternal nature—the *mitzvos* are still prevalent; only their fulfillment is temporarily restricted. This is because the *mitzvos*, as they exist within the divine will, are eternal even when we can't fulfill them. As G-d's will is eternal, so are His commandments except that when we are unable to fulfill them, their eternity is not manifest on the physical plane. However, if they would never be restored, their eternity would be irrevocably canceled on the physical plane, and that would be problematic because the Torah was given to us eternally on *this* plane. (See *Likutei Sichos* 18, p. 280, footnote 63; 19, pp. 182–183.)

¹⁴ This explains why the Rambam concludes halachah 3 (after explaining that Mashiach is not expected to change the natural law) with the statement that the Torah is eternal and can never change. Mashiach's primary role is to restore the *mitzvos* as they once were, not to change the world. He might indeed do that one day, but it is not his primary role.

¹⁵ This is also why Rambam adds,

“וְאֵלֵי הַדְּבָרִים הַקּוֹפְרִים בְּתוֹרַת הַסּוֹפְרִים כָּל הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁנֶּאֱמָרוּ עַל יְדֵי כָּל הַנְּבִיאִים.” All the promises about Mashiach made by all the future prophets, such as universal peace, prosperity, and abundance, all feed into Mashiach's primary goal—restoring the Torah. These promises remove the impediments to our fulfillment of the Torah's precepts. When we are not engaged in war or desperate to make ends meet, we are free to spend our day steeped in the Torah, growing inexorably closer to G-d, and fulfilling all His commandments.



SUMMARY

The eternity of the Torah depends on the coming of Mashiach.

KEY POINTS

1. Understanding Mashiach's role informs our belief in and anticipation of Mashiach.
2. Mashiach's primary purpose is to restore the *mitzvos* denied to us in the Diaspora.
3. All of his other roles, including the building of the Beis Hamikdash, are features of this central promise.
4. When we are not beleaguered by enemies, when we are stable and prosperous, when we are in our Land, and when we have the Beis Hamikdash, we can serve G-d completely and study His Torah undisturbed.



A VISION *for* MASHIACH

THE REBBE AND THE RAMBAM



LESSON 2
The Road to Redemption

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



untuned 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

אֲרָאֲנִי וְלֹא עֵתָהּ אֲשׁוּרְנֶנּוּ וְלֹא קְרוֹב דָּרָךְ כּוֹכַב מִיַּעֲקֹב וְקָם שִׁבְט
מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וּמַחֲץ וּמַחֲץ פְּאֵתַי מוֹאָב וְקִרְקַר כָּל־בְּנֵי־שֵׁת. וְהָיָה אֲדוֹם יְרֵשָׁה וְהָיָה
יְרֵשָׁה שֵׁעִיר אֲבִיו וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עָשָׂה חָיִל.

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 Umlchamoseihem*, 11:1

1. "אֲרָאֲנִי וְלֹא עֵתָהּ," זֶה דָּוִד.

"אֲשׁוּרְנֶנּוּ וְלֹא קְרוֹב," זֶה מְלֶכֶּה הַמְּשִׁיחַ.



2. "זָרַח כּוֹכֵב מִיַּעֲקֹב, זֶה דָּוִד.
וְיָקָם יִשְׁבֵּט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, זֶה מְלֶכֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ."
"I see it, but not now" refers to David.
"I behold it, but not in the near future" refers to Mashiach.

3. "וַיִּמְחַץ פְּאַתֵי מוֹאָב, זֶה דָּוִד. וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר "וַיִּגַּד אֶת מוֹאָב וַיִּמְדָּדֵם
בַּחֶבֶל" (שְׁמוּאֵל ב': ח, ב).
"וַיִּקְרַקֵּר כָּל בְּנֵי שֵׁת, זֶה הַמְּלֶכֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ, שְׁנַאֲמַר בּוֹ, "וַיִּמְשְׁלוּ מִזֵּם עַד
יָם" (זְכַרְיָה ט, י).
"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. "וַיְהִי אֶדוֹם יְרֻשָּׁה, זֶה דָּוִד, שְׁנַאֲמַר "וַיִּתְּהִי אֶדוֹם לְדָוִד לְעַבְדִּים"
וְגו' (שְׁמוּאֵל ב': ח, יד).
"וַיְהִי יְרֻשָּׁה וְגו', זֶה הַמְּלֶכֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ, שְׁנַאֲמַר, "וַיַּעֲלוּ מוֹשְׁעִים בְּהַר צִיּוֹן"
וְגו' (עוֹבַדְיָה א, כא).
"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



II. FOUR MESSIANIC ACHIEVEMENTS

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

וְאִם יַעֲמֹד מְלֶכֶךְ מִבֵּית דָּוִד הַזֶּה בְּתוֹרָה וְעוֹסֵק בְּמִצְוֹת כְּדָוִד אָבִיו, כְּפִי
תּוֹרָה שְׂבִכְתָּב וְשִׁבְעַל פֶּה.

וְיָכִיף כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵילָף בָּהּ וְלַחֲזֹק בְּדַקָּה.

וְיִלָּחֶם מְלַחְמוֹת ה', הַרְיֵזָה בְּחֻזְקָתָהּ שֶׁהִיא מְשִׁיחַת. אִם עָשָׂה וְהִצְלִיחַ,
וְנִצַּח כָּל הָאוֹמוֹת שֶׁסְּבִיבֵי, וְנִבְנָה מְקֻדָּשׁ בְּמִקְוָמוֹ, וְקִבְּץ גְּדֻחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,
הַרְיֵזָה מְשִׁיחַ בְּנֻדָּאִי.²

¹ The phrase: "The phrase: 'The nations will be gathered to him' 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.

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



וַיִּתְקַן אֶת הָעוֹלָם כְּלוֹ לַעֲבֹד אֶת ה' בְּיַחַד שְׂנֵאֲמַר, "כִּי אֲז אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל עַמִּים שְׂפָה בְרוּרָה לְקִרְא כָּלֵם בְּשֵׁם ה' וְלַעֲבֹדוֹ שְׂכָם אֶחָד" (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. 1718

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, "וְהָקָה אֶרֶץ בְּשֵׁבֶט פִּי וּבְרִיחַ שְׁפָתַי יִמִּית 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
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.

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

⁹ Rashi, ad loc.

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.



When the enemy is crushed, they can rebuild and mount a counter-attack. 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 ס'ומו 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

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.

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.



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.



A VISION *for* MASHIACH

THE REBBE AND THE RAMBAM



LESSON 3
Proof Positive

I. AN ARGUMENT FROM REFUGE

LEARNING EXERCISE

How would you answer the following question: It has been nearly two thousand years and Mashiach still has not arrived. Is it possible that Hashem changed His mind?

INTRODUCTION

This question can be answered in many ways, two of which emerged from the lessons we learned in the last two weeks:

1. In the first lesson we discussed Hashem's promise in the Torah to redeem us. If every word in the Torah is eternal and unchanging, it is not possible that Hashem changed His mind.
2. In the second lesson we learned that Hashem informed us through His prophets that Mashiach will come. We have His word that Mashiach is coming, and Hashem doesn't lie.

Today, we will learn that, as powerful as these two answers are, there is yet a more powerful answer: one that leaves us with absolutely no doubt that Mashiach is a factual certainty.

Over the last two weeks, we delved into the Rambam's teachings about Mashiach in light of the Rebbe's profound explanations that unveil broader and deeper themes about Mashiach. We will continue this journey today and discover that, under the Rebbe's treatment, Rambam unveils the ultimate proof for the coming of Mashiach.



CITIES OF REFUGE

Over the past two weeks, we studied Rambam's first halachah about Mashiach, in which he cited two proofs for the coming of Mashiach. The first proof is from the book of Devarim, which states that the Jewish people will return to Israel. The second proof is from the book of Bamidbar, which states that Mashiach will succeed and supersede David Hamelech as king. Today, we will study Rambam's next halachah about Mashiach, in which he cites a third proof for the coming of Mashiach:

TEXT 1

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos
Melachim Umilchamoseihem* 11:2

אף בְּעַרְי מְקַלְט הוּא אֹמֵר, "אִם יִרְחִיב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת גְּבֻלְךָ . . . וְיִסְפָּךָ לְךָ עוֹד שְׁלֹשׁ עָרִים" וְגו' (דברים יט ח-ט). וּמֵעוֹלָם לֹא הָיָה דָבָר זֶה, וְלֹא צָוָה הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְתוֹהוּ.

Similarly, with respect to the cities of refuge, the Torah states: "When Hashem will expand your borders . . . you must add three more cities." This mitzvah was never fulfilled, and surely, Hashem did not command us in vain.

This halachah makes three points:

1. In the future, Hashem will expand our borders.
2. At that time, we will designate three more cities of refuge.
3. Inasmuch as that has never happened yet, it is proof positive that Mashiach will come.

Let's break down these points:

An Explicit Tenet

Both proofs are necessary. The first proof is insufficient because it speaks only of the Redemption but doesn't specify that Mashiach will be a human redeemer, and we are obligated to believe in Mashiach as a human being anointed by Hashem. The second proof describes Mashiach as a human king, thus it is necessary. The second proof is also insufficient because it is not self-explanatory—we require our sages to decode it. Rambam wants us to know that to deny the coming of Mashiach is to deny an explicit tenet of the Torah, hence the first proof is necessary.

Likutei Sichos 24, p. 114



EXPANDED BORDERS

When Hashem promised to give the Holy Land to Avraham's children, he defined Israel as a block of ten lands:

TEXT 2A

Bereishis 15:19–21

אֶת־הַקִּינִי, וְאֶת־הַקְּנִזִּי, וְאֶת־הַקַּדְמוֹנִי, וְאֶת־הַחִתִּי, וְאֶת־הַפְּרִזִּי, וְאֶת־
הַרְפָּאִים, וְאֶת־הָאֱמֹרִי, וְאֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי, וְאֶת־הַגִּרְגָּשִׁי, וְאֶת־הַיְבוּסִי.

The [lands of] Keni, Kenizi, Kadmoni, Chiti, Perizi, the Rephaim, Emori, Kenaani, Girgashi, and Yevusi.

Yet, when Moshe was informed of the actual lands that the nation would inherit, three lands were omitted from the list.¹ Rashi explains that this wasn't a reversal of the original promise.² Every promise that Hashem makes will take place, but in the right time:

TEXT 2B

Rashi, Bereishis 15:19

עשר אומות יש כאן ולא נתן להם אלא שבעה גוים. והשלשה אדום, ומואב, ועמון, והם קיני, קניזי, וקדמוני, עתידים להיות ירושה לעתיד שנאמר, "אדום ומואב משלוח ידם ובני עמון משמעתם" (ישעיה יא יד).

There are ten nations [enumerated] here, but He gave them only seven nations. The other three, Edom, Moav, and Amon—referred to here as Keni, Kenizi, and Kadmoni—are destined to become our heritage in the future. As the passage states, [in the era of Mashiach] "The [Jews]

¹ Devarim 7:1:

פִּי יְבִיאֶךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אָתָּה בָּא שָׂמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ וְנָשַׁל גּוֹיִם רַבִּים מִפְּנֵיךָ חִתִּי וְהַגִּרְגָּשִׁי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי שְׂבָעָה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים גְּעִצוּיִם מִמְּךָ.

² Rashi bases this on *Bereishis Rabah* 44:23.

will reach out [to conquer] Edom and Moav, and the children of Amon will submit to them” (Isaiah 11:14).³

We now understand that the first part of Text 1 speaks of Hashem expanding the borders of Israel in the era of Mashiach. Let’s now break down the second part of the reading.

NINE CITIES

When the Jews arrived in Israel, they designated six cities of refuge: three on the West Bank of the Jordan River and three on its east bank. If a Jew committed murder on either side of the river, he would flee to one of these cities to avoid being killed at the hands of his victim’s next of kin. The killer was then transported to the courts, under guard, for trial. If he were found guilty, he would be punished. If he were found to have committed the killing inadvertently, he would return to the city of refuge as a haven from the next of kin.

He would then be required to live in that city until the passing of the *Kohen Gadol*.⁴ So long as he remained in the city, he was safe. If he left the city, his life became forfeit because the Torah grants

³ This chapter in Yeshayahu is the famous *haftarah* for *Acharon Shel Pesach* that describes the era of Mashiach. Among other things, Yeshayahu says that Jews will conquer these three lands when Mashiach comes. See *Encyclopedia Talmudis, Erets Yisrael*, p. 205, for multiple opinions about the identity of Keni, Kenizi, and Kadmoni. The opinion that these lands are Edom, Moav, and Amon is based on Rashi, cited in the lesson. See also Rashi on Devarim 2:4, that these lands were given in the meantime to other descendants of Avraham Avinu. Edom was given to Esav, and Moav and Amon were given to Lot’s two children. (Lot merited to receive an inheritance, though he is not Avraham’s son, in reward for his silence when Avraham told the Egyptians that Sarah was his sister.) On the modern map, these lands are largely in modern day Jordan. Parts of Saudi Arabia and southern Iraq might also be included, depending on the precise boundaries of the ancient lands.

⁴ One of the *Kohen Gadol*’s responsibilities in the *Kodesh Hakodashim* on Yom Kippur was to pray that Hashem protect us from causing tragedy inadvertently. Since the *Kohen Gadol*’s prayer failed to protect this Jew, he carried some of the responsibility. Therefore, when a new *Kohen Gadol* is appointed, this Jew may return home and rely on the next *Kohen Gadol*’s prayer to protect him from further mishap.



the victim's relatives license to avenge their loved one by taking the killer's life.⁵

These six cities were evenly spaced across the Land to provide equal access of refuge throughout the Land. However, when Mashiach comes and the Land will expand, people living in the expanded area, will need to travel great distances to access refuge. Wanting to ensure easy refuge for any Jew that might require it, Hashem commanded that we designate three more cities of refuge for this section of the Land when Mashiach comes.⁶

RAMBAM'S PROOF

There are many *mitzvos* that we cannot fulfill today and will only be able to fulfill when Mashiach comes. However, we were able to fulfill them before we went into *Galus*. This is the only mitzvah that

⁵ See the next footnote for an explanation for this unusual license.

⁶ This raises a double question. Inasmuch as all inadvertent sin is divinely orchestrated to expose the sinner's sinful predilections (see *Igeres Hakodesh* 28) and inasmuch as we will be free of the *yetser hara* in the era of Mashiach, there should be no inadvertent killers when Mashiach comes. Moreover, since victims are only killed because they committed an unobserved capital crime and, therefore, deserved to die (Makos 10b), and this won't occur in the era of Mashiach, there should be no victims of inadvertent killing. Accordingly, why will there be a need for cities of refuge in the first place?

Another question is, why will the victim's relatives avenge their loved one by killing the killer if we will be free of the urge for revenge when Mashiach comes.

The Rebbe explains that the cities of refuge will be necessary for Jews who killed inadvertently during *Galus*. Rabbi Yishma'el famously kept a diary of his inadvertent sins so he could atone for them with a *korban chatas* when Mashiach arrives. Similarly, those who committed the sin of inadvertent killing during *Galus* will need to rectify it through exile in cities of refuge.

The avengers won't seek to kill them out of revenge, but out of a desire to expiate the sinner's sin. The Torah doesn't provide the avenger license to kill to satisfy his blood lust, but rather because it brings atonement to the inadvertent killer. There are punishments that are facilitated by Hashem and punishments that are facilitated by the human hand. Among these, most are facilitated by the courts and this one, specifically, by the victim's relatives. These punishments only bring atonement if the correct person executes them. With respect to inadvertent killers, since he killed a living soul, the sin can only be expiated by those whose hearts are broken over the loss—the victim's relatives. Thus, they will feel driven to kill the inadvertent killer, not by revenge, but by the desire to expiate his sin. The only alternative atonement available to the inadvertent killer is to reside in the city of refuge. Hence, these cities will be needed when Mashiach comes. See *Likutei Sichos* 24, pp. 107–114.



was given to Moshe and recorded in the Torah but could never be fulfilled. It's activation awaits the expansion of the Land that will only occur in the era of Mashiach.

Rambam cites this mitzvah as proof positive that Mashiach will certainly come. There is a mitzvah suspended in midair, so to speak, just waiting to be activated; and a mitzvah can't be suspended or erased because *mitzvos* are eternal, just as Hashem is eternal. Hashem did not issue commandments in vain, so if He gave us a mitzvah to designate these cities, He will certainly give us the opportunity to fulfill it.

Rambam thus concludes that Mashiach will certainly come, and we will certainly inherit these lands.

TWO QUESTIONS

This is a resounding argument, but the Rebbe poses two questions:

1. What does Rambam gain from the third proof that has not already been established by the first two proofs?
2. If the third proof is necessary, why did Rambam cite it in a separate paragraph? He should either have presented all three proofs in separate paragraphs or placed all three in the same paragraph. Placing two in one paragraph and the third in another is unusual.

These questions might seem overly pedantic to the casual reader. Why does it matter that Rambam brought a third proof and placed it in a separate paragraph? Can't we just say, as the old saying goes, "If two are good, three are even better"?

Yet, to the Rebbe, these questions are compelling. If you read Rambam with the assumption that every detail, including the placement of paragraphs, is precise, you must wonder why Rambam deviated from the normal course. What was he trying to tell us about this proof, by placing it in its own paragraph? If you take note of these abnormalities, they can open deep windows into Rambam's train of thought.

Mashiach: A Spiritual Refuge

Of all the *mitzvos*, Hashem chose to include Mashiach in the mitzvah of the cities of refuge because Mashiach is also a refuge. Just as certain places serve as a refuge, so do certain times. The era of Mashiach is a refuge from all that is unhealthy and inappropriate in *Galus*. This includes famine, war, jealousy, and unhealthy competition. Even today, we can find refuge in the Torah. Just as those who took a life required refuge, so too, we require refuge when our sins impact our spiritual life force. We find this refuge in the Torah, which absorbs and protects our spiritual integrity.

Likutei Sichos 34, pp. 121–122



Indeed, as we will see, the Rebbe uses these questions as a springboard to reveal the profound depth of Rambam's words.

SUMMARY

After citing two proofs that Mashiach will come, Rambam cites a third proof from the fact that a mitzvah about cities of refuge was given to Moshe that will only be applicable when Mashiach comes. This raises two questions: (a) why the third proof is necessary, and (b) why Rambam cites it in a separate paragraph rather than together with the first two proofs.

In the next section we will present the Rebbe's answer that will reveal a profound depth in Rambam's words.



II. THREE TIERS

The Rebbe begins his explanation by laying out three types of assurances, each of which inspires a different level of confidence. We will call them:

1. Stipulated assurance
2. Adjustable assurance
3. Definite assurance

STIPULATED ASSURANCE

Suppose your teacher assures you that you will receive a reward if you maintain your grade average. What level of confidence would you have in this assurance?

You will feel good about your chances, but you won't feel certain that you will receive the reward. You know that if your grades slip, you will lose the reward. You won't be able to claim that it had been promised to you because it was clearly stipulated that it would depend on your grade average.

This means that even if you are determined to maintain your grades, your teacher's assurance doesn't inspire your confidence. Your determination might give you confidence, but the assurance is not foolproof.

Let's compare this to assurances that Hashem delivered through His prophets. When a prophet foretells a negative event, we are not assured that it will occur. It depends on our behavior. If we repent and earn a reprieve, the event will not occur. Moreover, if a prophet foretells a good event, it is only a surety if Hashem instructs the prophet to publicize the prophecy. If it was a private communication, it can be reversed in the event of sin.

In this sense, prophecies can be like the teacher's promise. Under certain circumstances, they can depend on our behavior. This tells us that prophecies are not always foolproof. Even if we are somehow



certain that we will maintain our steadfast loyalty to Hashem, our level of confidence is not assured by the prophecy. It is assured by our determination.

The same applies to prophecies about Mashiach.

TEXT 3

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 34, p. 117

דאף שלהיותה הבטחה לטוב, ומה שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא לנביא להבטיח לבני אדם בבשורה טובה אי אפשר שיתבטל מפני גרימת החטא, ועוד זאת שמעיקרא לא שייך בנדון דידן שיגרום החטא שהרי בלשון הרמב"ם, "כבר הבטיחה תורה שסוף ישראל לעשות תשובה בסוף גלותן, ומיד הן נגאלין . . . היינו שהובטחנו על זה גופא שישראל יעשו תשובה ולא יהי' מצב של יגרום החטא.

מכל מקום, הוודאות שבזה היא רק מצד גדרי הנבואה ואופנה.

This prophecy foretells a good event, and when Hashem instructs a prophet to publicize a positive future event, it is not subject to reversal by sin. Moreover, in this case such reversal is impossible because "The Torah assured us that by the end of their exile, Jews will repent and be instantly redeemed" [Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 7:5]. If our very repentance is assured, we will be unable to reverse the prophecy by sin.

Nevertheless, our certainty is [not produced by the prophecy itself, but] by external factors—the method of its delivery and the rules that govern it.

Prophecies are not inherent sureties. Though Hashem never lies, prophecies are stipulated affairs and can, therefore, be subject to reversal. And though the Mashiach prophecy is not technically reversible because (a) it was prophesied publicly, and (b) we are certain to repent, our confidence doesn't derive from the prophecy itself, but from these external technicalities.



In other words, the prophecy itself doesn't inspire confidence; the technicalities inspire confidence. Thus, the simple answer, that Mashiach must come because it has been prophesied, is dishonest. Mashiach must come because of certain conditions attached to the prophecy, neither of which are as compelling as a prophecy.

ADJUSTABLE ASSURANCE

Suppose your parents promise you a ten-thousand-dollar vacation to the Caribbean after your graduation. Can you be certain you will end up in the Caribbean once you graduate?

Well, a lot depends on conditions in the Caribbean. If there is a hurricane and the resort they booked was destroyed, your vacation might be postponed, or they might send you elsewhere. Also, if they didn't specify that they would make the arrangements for you, they might intend to give you the money and let you make the arrangements. In other words, you can trust that you will receive a ten-thousand-dollar vacation, but it might come in any number of guises.

Let's compare this to promises that are recorded in the written Torah. The Torah is eternal—nothing in it is subject to change. If something is promised in the Torah, it will certainly occur, yet it can occur in more than one way:

TEXT 4

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 34, pp. 117–118

בשאר חלקי התורה אפשר שענין הנצחיות שבהם יתקיים לא כפשוטו
אלא רק בתוכנם הרוחני... כן הוא גם בענין הבטחות הקדוש ברוך הוא
שנכתבו בתורה. שקיומן בפועל תלוי באופן ההבטחה, לפי התנאים
וגדרים שפירשו חכמינו זכרונם לברכה. ואם נכתבה ההבטחה בלי
תנאים אלה אינו ודאי שתתקיים לפי פשוטה דוקא.



[Though the Torah is eternal, and every word must be true,] its words can be fulfilled in a spiritual sense rather than literally.⁷ . . . The same applies to the divine promises recorded in the Torah. They must certainly come true, but subject to the conditions and definitions transmitted by our sages of blessed memory. If an assurance was recorded without stipulation [that it was intended literally], it might not occur in a literal sense.

For example, the Torah promises long life to those who honor their parents.⁸ Yet, some people who obey their parents die young. The Talmud asks about this and explains that Hashem always keeps His promise of long life—sometimes in this life and sometimes in the afterlife.⁹

The same can apply to the promises about Mashiach recorded in the Torah. The fact that the Torah promises that Mashiach will come doesn't put every mind at ease. It can't prevent us from questioning whether this promise will be kept in a literal sense or in a metaphorical sense. Though our sages informed us that this promise will be fulfilled literally, you can't be called a heretic if you question that.¹⁰ Denying our sages' teachings is wrong, but it is not heretical.¹¹

⁷ For example, the historical events recorded in the Torah are not meant to be understood as eternally continuing or recurring. The eternal dimension of these stories lies in their eternally relevant homilies and spiritual messages.

⁸ Devarim 5:15.

⁹ Chulin 142a.

¹⁰ In addition, even if you accept the teachings of our sages, your assurance doesn't result from the Torah, but from our sages. The Torah's promise doesn't quiet all our fears; that is done by our sages' explanation.

¹¹ The point that we made earlier about prophecies—that they can be reversed if we don't deserve them—can also apply to promises made in the Torah. For example, Moshe *Rabbeinu* said in *Az Yashir* that the neighboring nations will tremble in dread, "עד יעבור עמך ה', עד יעבור עם זו קניית"—"Until your nation passes, O G-d, until this nation that you acquired passes." The Gemara (Berachos 4a) explains that the first "your nation," refers to the generation that came to Israel in the days of Yehoshua. The second one refers to the generation that returned to Israel to build the second Beis Hamikdash. They, too, deserved to travel with an outstretched arm (Rashi), but they didn't because they were unworthy of the miracle. Thus, they returned to Israel under the aegis of a foreign power—Persia. This demonstrates that even assurances given in the Torah can sometimes depend on our state of worthiness.



DEFINITE ASSURANCE

The only kind of assurance that inspires absolute confidence is an absolutely definitive promise.

When the Torah tells us that there is a mitzvah that could never be fulfilled and will only be fulfillable when Mashiach comes, it is a definitive and absolute assurance that Mashiach will come. This is because there is nothing more absolute than a divine commandment:

TEXT 5

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 34, pp. 115–116

וכמו שכתב הרמב"ם בהלכות יסודי התורה, "דבר ברור ומפורש בתורה שהיא מצוה עומדת לעולם ולעולמי עולמים אין לה לא שינוי ולא גרעון ולא תוספת" . . . ולכן כיון שענין הגאולה הוא פרט במצות ערי מקלט, הרי כשם שערי מקלט היא מצוה עומדת לעולם, כו' אין לה לא שינוי כו', כך אי אפשר להיות שינוי חס ושלום בהבטחה זו.

Rambam wrote, "It is clear and explicit in the Torah that a mitzvah remains forever without change, addition, or diminishment" [Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah, 9:1] . . . Once we establish that the Redemption is part of a mitzvah, which is eternal and is not subject to change, it becomes impossible to suggest that the promise of Mashiach is, G-d forbid, subject to change.

Belief in Mashiach is a foundational Jewish concept, but it is not a mitzvah. As a non-mitzvah, it is possible to argue that, "If he didn't come until now, he won't come." We would reject the argument, but we could not reject it categorically.

By introducing the cities of refuge, Rambam demonstrated that Mashiach *is* part of a mitzvah. Once we are told that Mashiach is part of a mitzvah, the fact of his coming becomes an absolute verity that is not subject to change. As Hashem is not only unchanging, but also unchangeable, so is a mitzvah. If you argue that Mashiach's coming is subject to change, you are also arguing that *mitzvos* are subject to change. This is untenable in the Jewish faith. It is tantamount to heresy.

Not a Mitzvah

Belief in Mashiach is foundational to Judaism because, as we learned in Lesson One, Torah can't become obsolete. Unless Mashiach comes, the Cities of Refuge mitzvah will never be activated and many more will become obsolete. Yet, belief in Mashiach is not a mitzvah because *mitzvos* are specific instructions. A comprehensive Jewish concept can't be defined as a specific mitzvah, even if it entails specific requirements (*Sefer Hamitzvos, shoresh 4*). Mashiach is a comprehensive concept; hence it is foundational to Judaism but not a mitzvah.

Likutei Sichos 18, p. 280



III. THE REBBE'S NOVEL INSIGHT

THE NEED FOR THREE PROOFS

This, explains the Rebbe, is why Rambam adds the third proof. By citing the cities of refuge, Rambam provides categorical and irrefutable proof of the verity of Mashiach. You can't deny that Mashiach will come in a literal sense without claiming that the mitzvah has changed.

Rambam's first proof was from an assurance given to us in the Torah that Mashiach will come. A person who wishes to deny Mashiach's coming could reinterpret and twist that promise, without being called a heretic, by simply arguing that it is to be understood as a spiritual deliverance.

Rambam's second proof was from Bilam's prophecy. This, too, could be denied, without appearing to be a heretic, simply by claiming that prophecies are subject to forfeiture if you don't deserve them.¹²

Rambam's third proof, which demonstrates that Mashiach is part of a mitzvah, is not just another proof. It upgrades the promise of Mashiach to the category of irrefutable. You can't be a believing Jew and suggest that a mitzvah might be obsolete. You certainly can't be a believing Jew and suggest that a mitzvah might be a nonstarter. Inasmuch as this mitzvah must be activated, it follows that Hashem must bring Mashiach.¹³

¹² We might respond with two forceful arguments: (a) this prophecy was publicized, and (b) we were assured that we will repent before the end of *Galus*. We might win the debate, but it won't be as resounding as the proof from the mitzvah. This is so for two reasons: (a) denial of either of these points doesn't render one a heretic, and (b) these details are extraneous to the assurance inherent in the prophecy itself.

¹³ The obvious question is: Once we have the third proof, why do we need the first two proofs? The answer was provided at length in the first two lessons. They demonstrate that Mashiach will (a) restore the Torah to its original complete state (and as we learned in this lesson, add the one mitzvah that wasn't practicable in its original state), and (b) change the global atmosphere to one of holiness and G-dliness. See also sidebars titled "The Escalating Pyramid" and "The Explicit Tenet."

The Escalating Pyramid

Although the Torah is holier and more important than prophecies, the punishment for infraction of a prophecy is more severe than the punishment for violating a commandment in the Torah. There is a sliding scale of punishments for violating a mitzvah, but one who violates or denies any aspect of a prophecy is punished by an early passing. The reason is that prophecies are Hashem's direct communication to us. If we deny or violate them, it is tantamount to denying or ignoring a personal instruction from Hashem.

Accordingly, Rambam's three proofs can be understood in escalating order. First, a proof from the Torah. Then a proof from (Bilam's) prophecy, a personal communication from Hashem to every Jew. Finally, a mitzvah, which renders Mashiach as an incontrovertible fact.

Likutei Sichos 34, pp. 120–121



THE NEED FOR A SEPARATE PARAGRAPH

The Rebbe's clue to this entire argument is that Rambam placed this proof in a separate paragraph and didn't include it with the other two proofs. To the Rebbe, this indicated that this isn't just another proof. To the Rambam, it is in a category of its own.

The first two proofs share the common denominator that they are resounding but not conclusive. Both are subject to change on some level and require additional arguments to bolster their surety. This proof stands alone and doesn't need to be propped up, because it is conclusive. This is why Rambam presented this proof in its own paragraph.

The very knowledge that there is a mitzvah in the Torah that awaits the coming of Mashiach—that Hashem is holding in reserve until the coming of Mashiach—fortifies our belief in his coming. May we merit seeing him speedily in our days.

KEY POINTS

1. A prophecy can be subject to reversal under certain conditions. Thus, the confidence that it inspires is not foolproof even when we are certain that a particular prophecy will come to pass.
2. A promise in the Torah can be fulfilled in a literal sense or in a spiritual sense. Thus, the assurance that it offers is not foolproof even when we are certain that a particular promise will be fulfilled in the literal sense.
3. A mitzvah is inherently not subject to change. As Hashem is unchanging, so are His *mitzvos*.
4. Knowing that Mashiach is included in a mitzvah that has never been fulfilled, and is waiting for Mashiach to activate it, is proof positive that Mashiach will certainly come.



A VISION *for* MASHIACH

THE REBBE AND THE RAMBAM



LESSON 4
Desperate for Mashiach

I. THE MASHIACH CAMPAIGN

INTRODUCTION

If you study the Rebbe's teachings and listen to his talks, you know that his entire life was marked by an intense yearning for Mashiach. In 1960, the Rebbe wrote a letter to Israel's second president, Mr. Yitzchak Ben Zvi, in which he shared the following recollection:

TEXT 1

The Rebbe, *Igros Kodesh*, Volume 12, p. 414

From the day I went to school, and even earlier, a vision of the future redemption of the Jewish People from their final exile began to form in my imagination. A redemption of such magnitude and grandeur, that through it, all the torments, persecutions, and massacres of the Galus will be understood.

Not content to yearn privately, the Rebbe would talk about it at every opportunity. As time went on, the Rebbe went from yearning to pleading, and even demanding, that Hashem bring Mashiach.¹ In fact, the Rebbe never tired of teaching and encouraging others to pray for Mashiach and to demand it from Hashem. Single-handedly, the Rebbe set out to change the outlook of the Jewish people, from passive anticipation to desperate yearning. The Rebbe taught us to be intensely impatient with *Galus* and to be fiercely in need of Mashiach. Where did all this come from?²

¹ On 20 Nissan, 5748, the Rebbe said that he began this campaign upon his arrival in the United States.

² In that *sichah*, the Rebbe said that though he did not observe his father or grandfather demanding Mashiach publicly, the fact is that this campaign has produced positive results—children and adults who eschew *Galus* and plead for Mashiach.

Learn to Demand

When Moshe saw the Jews suffering in Egypt, he hotly demanded of Hashem, “*Lamah Hare’osa laam hazeh*,” Why have you harmed this people (Shemos 5:22)? Moshe knew that his forbears accepted their fate silently, but he complained, nonetheless. Hashem insisted that this be recorded in the Torah so that we would know that we too may, and must, demand an end to the *Galus*. Moreover, this insistent demand does not impact our faith in Hashem and our ability to serve Him with a complete heart.

Toras Menachem 5743:1, pp. 824–827



THE OBLIGATION TO AWAIT

As with all things about Mashiach, the Rebbe took his guidance from the single halachic authority who ruled on matters of Mashiach—the Rambam.

In the last three weeks, we have studied the Rambam's *halachos* about Mashiach. We discovered that when Rambam is studied under the Rebbe's treatment, inner streams of depth and profundity are laid bare. The same applies to this subject—yearning and pleading for Mashiach.

Let's look at the seemingly simple words of the Rambam, and then we will explore the depth that the Rebbe saw in these words:

TEXT 2

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

וְכָל מִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ מְאֱמִין בּוֹ, אוֹ מִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ מְחַכֵּה לְבִיאָתוֹ, לֹא בִשְׂאֵר נְבִיאִים
בְּלִבָּד הוּא כּוֹפֵר, אֶלָּא בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִשְׁנֵה רַבֵּנוּ.

Anyone who does not believe in him or does not await his coming, denies not only the statements of the other prophets, but those of the Torah and Moshe Rabeinu.

The Rebbe's intense and lifelong focus on Mashiach was rooted in these five words: "does not await his coming."³ The casual reader might equate awaiting Mashiach with belief in him. Just as belief in Mashiach need not dominate our lives, it can operate in the background as a constant presence, so too can the requirement to await Mashiach be a silent presence in the back of our minds. It can be a passive anticipation rather than a desperate yearning. We can generally await him, but it need not be a central focus of every moment in our day. The Rebbe contended that this cannot be.

³ Based on Chabakuk 2:3, "אם יתמהמה חכה לו."

Bleak for a Reason

When Mashiach comes, we will understand the value of *Galus*, but today this is not only unknown, it is not possible to understand the value of such horrendous suffering. No human mind can grasp the purpose, benefit, or justification for such intense suffering. We believe that there is a reason, but Hashem has concealed it from us. This is because if we understood why we suffer, it might impact our ability to cry out for Mashiach. And Hashem wants us to cry with sincerity.

Toras Menachem 5744:1, pp. 290–291



But many asked the Rebbe why he understands the words, “await his coming,” as a desperate yearning for an imminent arrival. Although the word “await” can be understood as active waiting, it can also be understood as passive waiting. For example, if someone sends you a check via mail, you anticipate it passively, but it’s not necessarily on your front burner.

ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

When *Chazal* coined the structure of our daily prayers, they determined that we pray three times daily for Mashiach.

TEXT 3

Sidur Tehilat Hashem, Annotated Edition,
Kehot, (New York, New York, 2002) p. 50

אֶת־צֶמַח דָּוִד עֲבַדְךָ מְהֵרָה תִצְמַח, וְקִרְנֵו תִגְדֹּל בְּיִשׁוּעָתְךָ, כִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ
קִוִּינוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם

Cause the scion of David your servant to flourish speedily, and increase his power by your salvation, for we hope for your salvation all day.

The Rebbe observed that if there is ever a time that we mean what we say, it is when we speak directly to Hashem in *Shemoneh Esrei*. We don’t ask for Mashiach to come tomorrow or even a moment later. We ask for him to come speedily, which means immediately. Although we ask for Mashiach in the morning, if he doesn’t arrive by the afternoon, we ask again. And if Mashiach is not here by evening, we ask a third time.

Halachic Proof

There is an opinion in the Talmud (Eruvin 64a) that a Kohen may not drink wine while in *Galus* in case Mashiach comes and he will need to be sober to serve in the Beis Hamikdash. Ordinary intoxication can be walked off in twenty-four minutes, at most (the maximum time it takes to walk a *mil*). This means that at any moment in time, halachah rules that Mashiach is no more (and likely less) than twenty-three minutes and fifty-nine seconds away.

Likutei Sichos 2, pp. 618–619.



Moreover, though we only verbalize our request three times daily, we plead and hope internally all day long, as we proclaim in the prayer, “we hope for your salvation all day.”⁴

This is not a passive request for Mashiach. It is an active and constant form of waiting.⁵ By including this prayer in *Shemoneh Esrei*, Chazal taught us the proper way to await Mashiach.

Additionally, we can tell how important awaiting Mashiach is from the fact that there are only six questions asked of us when we are brought to judgement in the afterlife. One of them is whether we awaited our salvation.⁶ This is not a question about three moments in our day. This is a question about our entire lives. It tells us that we must await and expect Mashiach every moment of every day.

THE POWER OF HOPE

We have presented the Rebbe’s understanding of the Rambam’s imperative, that every Jew must await Mashiach every moment of every day, but the question is why: Why is waiting important? What does it accomplish?

⁴ *Likutei Sichos* 20, p. 459. In another *sichah* (*Toras Menachem* 5744:4, pp. 2397–2399), the Rebbe added that the language in Hebrew, “כל היום”, proves that the famous words in the thirteen *ikarim*, “אחכה לו בכל יום שיבוא”, doesn’t mean I await him every day, but that I await him all day long. Moreover, the Rebbe pointed out that the word, “מהרה”, proves that the intention is not to hope all day for Mashiach to come at some later point. Our intention is that we hope for him to come, “מהרה”, immediately. To those who argue that we should leave the timing of Mashiach to Hashem, the Rebbe asked dramatically: When we pray for someone who is ill, do we ask for immediate healing or for healing at some indeterminate point in the future? The difference, said the Rebbe, is that when we care about the cause, we want it immediately. When the yearning for the *Ge’ulah* becomes personal, we don’t make peace with it and are not content to wait 1,900 years, G-d forbid.

⁵ When Moshe asked 515 times that Hashem allow him to enter Israel, Hashem eventually told him to stop asking (Rashi, *Devarim* 3:26). *Chazal* clearly understood that Hashem has no similar compunctions about us asking and pleading, and repeating our pleas, three times every day to be allowed into Israel with the coming of Mashiach. *Toras Menachem* 5745:3 pp. 1948–1949.

⁶ *Shabbos* 31a. The Rebbe cites this in *Likutei Sichos* 22, p. 76 in a lengthy discussion about the importance of awaiting Mashiach.

Desperate to Reveal

In Egypt, before his passing, Yaakov gathered his children and, “*Bikesh legalos es hakeits*,” he sought to reveal the time of their *Ge’ulah* (Rashi on *Bereishis* 49:1). Similarly, a Jew in *Galus* cannot be complacent. We must be gripped with a sincere desire for the revelation of Mashiach.

Likutei Sichos 20, p. 234



To answer this question, the Rebbe would point to the following teaching:⁷

TEXT 4

Midrash, *Yalkut Shimoni*, Psalms 736

אין ביד ישראל אלא הקווי, כדאי הן לגאולה בשכר הקווי.

If Israel's only merit is their hope for Ge'ulah, they will be worthy of Ge'ulah in the merit of their hope alone.

This is an amazing statement. We were sent into *Galus* because of our sins, yet our sages say that we can be redeemed even if we don't repent. Even if our only merit is that we wait and hope for Mashiach.⁸

This leaves us with a question: Waiting isn't difficult or challenging, so why is the reward for waiting set so high? Why is waiting meritorious enough to render us worthy of his coming?

UNSHAKABLE FAITH

The Rebbe explained that waiting for Mashiach is not as easy as it might sound. It is an exceedingly difficult task that requires unshakable faith, and therefore, carries sufficient merit to render us worthy of Mashiach.

The Rebbe's explanation is based on a story recorded in *Tanach*:

In the year 3213 (548 BCE), Chizkiyahu Hamelech was king in Yerushalayim when the city was besieged by King Sancheirev of Assyria. Over the previous three decades, Assyria's powerful army had conquered and exiled the ten tribes living under *Malchus*

⁷ *Toras Menachem* 5746:1, p. 156.

⁸ Moreover, see *Midrash Zuta*, Eichah 1:26: if we hope, Mashiach will come instantly "דור שהוא מצפה למלכותי, מיד הם נגאלים שנאמר, 'יש תקוה לאחריתך נאם ה' ושבנו בנים לגבולם" (ירמיה לא טז).



Yisrael.⁹ Sancheirev now threatened to conquer and exile the Jews and Chizkiyahu was so fearful that he donned sackcloth and went to pray in the Beis Hamikdash. Yet, when the prophet Yeshayahu assured him that G-d would save the Jews, Chizkiyahu felt completely reassured. So much so, that he climbed into bed saying to Hashem, “I have no strength to pursue, to kill, or even to sing your praises. I will go to bed and you save the Jews.”¹⁰ Indeed, Hashem came through and the Assyrian army was miraculously vanquished before it could set foot into the city.¹¹

In the face of abject danger, Chizkiyahu placed his complete trust in Hashem and was fully at ease. This is the kind of trust and expectation required of us:

TEXT 5

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 7, p. 275

על דרך זה צריך כל אחד ואחד לבטוח בביאת המשיח בבטחון גמור
בלי שום פקפוק, ובאופן דאחכה לו בכל יום, שמחר ממש יבוא משיח.
גם כשמצד חשבונות של שכל וטבע אינו רואה שום מקור לזה. ובטחון
זה עצמו ימהר ויחיש את ביאתו בקרוב ממש.

We must trust similarly, without a shadow of a doubt, in the coming of Mashiach—in a manner of, “I await every day” that Mashiach will arrive literally tomorrow. Even if we see no rational or natural basis for this trust, the trust itself will hasten his immediate arrival.

This kind of trust and hope is challenging enough and meritorious enough to bring Mashiach. This is not mere hope. This means to

⁹ Melachim II 17:23. Shortly after the passing of Shlomo Hamelech, the Jewish people splintered into two kingdoms (Melachim I 12). The Davidic line remained sovereign over two and a half *shevatim* in the area of Yerushalayim and its environs. The other kingdom had fallen to Assyria and Sancheirev was now poised to attack *Malchus* Yehudah.

¹⁰ *Eichah Rabah* 4:15. Chizkiyahu was terminally ill at the time. In fact, Yeshayahu had already prophesied his death, but Hashem granted Chizkiyahu fifteen additional years.

¹¹ For the entire story see Melachim II 18–19; Yeshayahu 36–37.



be as certain of his arrival as Chizkiyahu was of the fall of Assyria. Certain enough to take it to the bank.^{12 13}

SUMMARY

We are obligated to desperately await the coming of Mashiach all day, every day. Moreover, we must expect him with certainty, even at times when his arrival seems most unlikely. In the merit of this desperate yearning, Mashiach will come.

¹² The story is told that someone once informed the Rebbe that Jews in his community are expecting Mashiach. The Rebbe asked if they were prepared to offer a loan to be repaid upon Mashiach's arrival.

¹³ On this basis, the Rebbe (*Toras Menachem* 5746:1, pp. 536–537) asked that the following commentary of the Chida (Rabbi Chaim David Azulai) on the words, “כי לישועתך קיוונו כל היום,” be publicized. Shouldn't we say to send us Mashiach because we repented and are worthy of him? How does our hoping become a reason for Hashem to send us Mashiach? The answer is that truly hoping for Mashiach is a sufficient merit for the coming of Mashiach (*Midbar Kadmos* [kuf 16], p. 157). The Chida attributes this *chidush* to the *Tsemach David*, but it is interesting to note that this is actually the Chida's *chidush*. The *Tsemach David* (Parshas Vayechi, p. 123a) wrote something slightly different:

לישועתך קוותי השם, יש לדקדק שהי' לנו לאמר ישועתך קווינו השם בלא למ"ד. מהו לישועתך? ... בשביל לזכות לישועתך קוותי השם, שעל ידי הקווי אני זוכה הישועה.

In that *sichah*, the Rebbe also asked that the commentary of Radak (Shmuel II 24:25) be publicized. Radak says (based on Midrash Tehilim 17) that David Hamelech's warriors only fell in battle because they didn't demand the building of the Beis Hamikdash. The Midrash goes on to observe that if this was true in the era of David Hamelech before the Beis Hamikdash, how much more so today when it has been built and was since destroyed. This, concludes the Midrash, is why *Chazal* instituted the practice of praying for Mashiach three times every day.



II. PRAYING ALL DAY

THE RED HEIFER

Until now we presented the Rebbe's desperate yearning for Mashiach and the thrice daily prayer for Mashiach. But the Rebbe went beyond that. Nearly each of the Rebbe's public talks and letters concluded with a prayer for Mashiach. It is, of course, a wonderful custom if one chooses to adopt it, but the Rebbe encouraged and even demanded that everyone take on this practice. Was this the Rebbe's personal custom or did the Rebbe see this as an obligation? And if it is an obligation, what is the source for the obligation to pray for Mashiach at every turn?

Once again, we are not surprised that the Rebbe found his inspiration in the Rambam:

TEXT 6

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Parah Adumah* 3:4

וְתִשַׁע פָּרוֹת אֲדָמוֹת נִעְשׂוּ מִשְׁנִצָּטוּי בְּמִצְוָה זוֹ עַד שֶׁחָרַב הַבַּיִת בְּשָׁנָה.
רִאשׁוֹנָה עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ. שְׁנֵי עָשָׂה עֶזְרָא. וְשִׁבְעַ מֵעֶזְרָא עַד חֲרָבֹן
הַבַּיִת. וְהָעֲשִׂירִית יַעֲשֶׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ הַקָּשִׁיחַ מִהֲרָה יִגְלֶה אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן.

Nine red heifers were brought as offerings from the day Jews received this commandment until the destruction of the second Temple. The first was brought by Moshe Rabeinu. The second was brought by Ezra. Seven others were offered until the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash. And the tenth will be brought by the king Mashiach; may he speedily be revealed. Amen, so may it be G-d's will.

As usual, the Rebbe takes note and learns lessons from a seemingly insignificant anomaly in the Rambam.

Pray and He Will Hear

Jews suffered for many decades in Egypt, but when conditions grew unbearable, they began to cry. The Torah tells us that as soon as they cried, "Vataal shavasam el haElokim," Their cry reached Hashem (Shemos 2:23). We too must know that if we pray and plead for Mashiach, "Vayeda Elokim," Hashem will accept our prayers.

Toras Menachem 5743:2, pp.802–803



The Rebbe asks: Why does the Rambam conclude this statement with a prayer for Mashiach's speedy delivery? After all, *Mishneh Torah* is a book of halachah, and such a prayer seems out of place in a book of law.

The Rebbe explains that Rambam's prayer is not a postscript; it is meant to teach us an important halachah, as you would expect from a book of halachah. Since Rambam ruled that we must constantly await Mashiach, it follows that so long as Mashiach hasn't arrived, a Jew feels that something critical is lacking and should, therefore, voice it:

TEXT 7

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 28, p. 136

בשעת איינער וועלכער איז מחכה אויף ביאת המשיח דערמאנט אן ענין בשייכות צו משיח'ן, אפילו עס זאל זיין בדרך אגב, קען ער דאס ניט פארבייגיין, נאר דאס איז ביי אים גלייך מעורר רגשי הצפי' צו משיח'ן. ווערט עס צרכו דארף ער מתפלל זיין על זה, זאגן א תפלה אויף מילוי חסרונות, ער זאל זוכה זיין מהרה, בהקדם תיכף, צו ביאת המשיח.

When the topic of Mashiach comes up even in ancillary fashion, people who constantly await Mashiach can't let it slide. It instantly arouses feelings of desperation for Mashiach to the point that it becomes a need. They feel compelled to follow up with a prayer for his imminent arrival.¹⁴

Indeed, every time the Rebbe had an opportunity to weave the subject of Mashiach into his talks or letters, he did. And every time the

¹⁴ The Rebbe explains that Rambam only inserts this prayer once rather than every time the topic of Mashiach arises because it is a book of halachah, not prayer. He inserts it once to teach us to pray for Mashiach every time the subject comes up. The Rebbe explains that Rambam chose to insert it in the topic of *parah adumah* because it is relevant to Mashiach. *Galus* is associated with *tum'as mes* because in *Galus* we are detached from Hashem, the source of life. Mashiach can, therefore, be compared to the purification from the status of *tum'as mes*, which is also the subject of *parah adumah*.



topic came up, the Rebbe followed it up with a heartfelt prayer for Mashiach's immediate arrival.¹⁵

SUMMARY

When you are desperate for Mashiach, you add a prayer for him every time the subject comes up or his name is mentioned. You don't pray only at the fixed times; you pray spontaneously at every opportunity.

One Moment, One Prayer

There can be only one reason for Mashiach's tardiness, for even one additional moment after 1,900 years. It is because G-d wants us to pray, beseech, seek, and demand *ad masay*, how long will it take? He wants us to cry from the depths of our hearts, "We hope for your salvation all day long," and, "May our eyes behold your return to *Tsion* with mercy," etc. If we pray with complete sincerity, Mashiach will come immediately.

Sefer Hasichos 5747:1, p. 226

¹⁵ When the Rebbe asked to publicize the Radak (see footnote 13), the Rebbe noted that Radak concludes his commentary with the words, "*Amen kein yehi ratson.*"



III. MAKING IT REAL

LIVING WITH MASHIACH

In his worldwide campaign to inspire enthusiasm for Mashiach, the Rebbe encouraged us to live with Mashiach every moment of our day. When we do a mitzvah or study Torah we must think, “This action will bring Mashiach closer!” The Rebbe insisted that we should not be like a fieldhand who plants seeds without thinking about when and how the fruits might grow.¹⁶ Rather, every time we plant a seed, we must envision the process all the way through to the end—the reaping. As planting initiates the reaping process, so does every mitzvah hasten the coming of Mashiach. Every time we do a mitzvah, we must visualize ourselves reaping the reward of our actions—the coming of Mashiach—from the very onset.¹⁷

When we don *tefilin*, we must imagine ourselves standing in *tefilin* as Mashiach arrives. When we study Torah, we must imagine our studies being interrupted by the coming of Mashiach. This stimulates even more excitement about Mashiach.¹⁸ Also, knowing that every mitzvah can be the pivotal act that tilts the scales and brings Mashiach, motivates us to do more *mitzvos*¹⁹ and to commit fewer sins.²⁰

To establish this mindset—to think of Mashiach and live with the concept of Mashiach even before he arrives—the Rebbe suggested that we study about Mashiach every day.²¹

Yearning to Return

When Yaakov fell ill in Egypt, he summoned his son Yosef and instructed him, “*Unesani miMitsrayim*,” Carry me out of Egypt (Bereishis 47:30). A Jew should never feel comfortable in *Galus*. We should feel an urgent desire and deep yearning at every moment to be lifted out of *Galus*. We must beg Hashem, as Yaakov did, “*Unesani miMitsrayim*,” Take us out of *Galus*.

Likutei Sichos 25, pp. 273–274

¹⁶ Joke: A visitor to a park observed city employees digging holes and filling them back up. When he asked what they were doing, they replied, “We were hired to dig and fill the holes. It’s not our fault that the fellow who is meant to plant the tree didn’t show up.”

¹⁷ *Likutei Sichos* 22, pp. 75–77.

¹⁸ *Likutei Sichos* 21, p. 19.

¹⁹ *Likutei Sichos* 8, p. 359.

²⁰ *Likutei Sichos* 20, p. 234.

²¹ And especially from *Likutei Sichos. Sefer Hasichos* 5751:2, p. 501.



TEXT 8

The Rebbe, *Sefer Hasichos* 5751:2, pp. 691–692

המדובר בתקופה האחרונה בנוגע להוספה המיוחדת בלימוד התורה בעניני גאולה ומשיח, לא רק בתור סגולה למהר ולקרב ביאת המשיח והגאולה, אלא גם ובעיקר כדי להתחיל לחיות בעניני משיח וגאולה. לחיות עם הזמן דימות המשיח על ידי זה שהשכל נעשה ממולא וחדור בהבנה והשגה בעניני משיח וגאולה שבתורה. ומהשכל מתפשט וחדור גם ברגש הלב, ועד להנהגה בפועל, במחשבה דיבור ומעשה, באופן המתאים לזמן מיוחד זה שעומדים על סף הגאולה, ומראים באצבע שהנה זה המלך המשיח בא.

I have been encouraging Jews to increase their studies about the Ge'ulah and about Mashiach. My intention is not only to hasten the coming of Mashiach, but also, and primarily, to learn to live with Mashiach and Ge'ulah. When our minds fill with a thorough understanding of the Torah's teachings on the Ge'ulah, we begin to live in a Mashiach-like atmosphere. This stimulates excitement over Mashiach's imminent arrival, as well as thoughts, words, and behaviors that are appropriate for this special era—when we stand at the verge of Ge'ulah, ready to point and say, "Behold, here comes the King Mashiach!"

When we live with Mashiach in our every waking moment, we begin to think as Mashiach thinks, see the world through a Mashiach perspective, and behave as we will when Mashiach arrives. Challenging days won't dampen our optimism and enthusiasm for his imminent arrival. Dark moods won't keep us from performing every mitzvah that we can to hasten his arrival. Naturally, our enthusiasm will bubble over and we will discuss it with our family and friends at every opportunity, hoping to inspire similar feelings in them.²²

²² *Sefer Hasichos* 5751:2, p. 707.



When we each create a Mashiach bubble in our personal lives, the Mashiach atmosphere will spread from the personal to the collective and bring about the *Ge'ulah*.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

This responsibility falls on each of us individually. We can't hand it off to our teachers, colleagues, or even the Rebbe. For Mashiach to come, we must each do our part:

TEXT 9

The Rebbe, *Sefer Hasichos* 5747:1 p. 224

על כל אחד ואחד מישראל מוטלת השליחות להביא ולגלות את בית המקדש העתידי, שבנוי ומשוכלל בשמים, וצריך רק לירד ולהתגלות למטה, תיכף ומיד ממש. וכאמור ענין זה שייך לכל אחד ואחד מישראל, אנשים, נשים, וטף, בנערינו, ובזקנינו, גו' בבנינו, ובבנותינו, מהגדול שבגדולים, עד לקטן שבקטנים, ללא כל חילוקי עדות, חוגים, ומפלגות כו'. שכן אין זה ענין השייך לסוג או נוסח כו' מסוים, כי אם ענין השייך לכל אחד ואחד מישראל.

Every single Jewish person is entrusted with the mission of bringing and revealing the future Beis Hamikdash, which is ready and fully constructed in heaven, and needs only to descend and be revealed below, immediately. This sacred responsibility rests upon every single Jew; man, woman, and child—our youth, elderly, sons, and daughters, from the greatest to the simplest, irrespective of community, sector, or party, etc. This is not unique to a particular type of Jew or ideology; it is binding on every single Jew.²³

The Rebbe would add that this is not an option. No one can say, “I am too busy with other important things and don't have time,

²³ See also, *Toras Menachem* 5747:2, p. 622; *Sefer Hasichos* 5751:2, p. 474.



energy, or headspace to worry about Mashiach.”²⁴ Bringing an end to *Galus* is our personal responsibility and the sacred overarching obligation of our times:

TEXT 10

The Rebbe, 12 Tamuz 5744²⁵

איתא בירושלמי, "כל מי שלא נבנה בית המקדש בזמנו כאילו חרב בית המקדש בזמנו." אמנם עברו כבר אלף תשע מאות שנה, ועוד שנים לאחרי זה. אבל היות שהיום הוא יום חמשי פרשת פנחס, ונמצאים כבר לאחר תפלת מעריב, ולא נבנה בית המקדש - צריכים לדעת, שצריכה להיות הצעקה על הגאולה כאילו חרב ביום חמשי פרשת פנחס... נצייר לעצמנו, כאשר נשרף בית המקדש ועומד לו שם יהודי שהוא יהודי קשה, ויהודי מאובן (א הארטער איד, א שטיינערנער איד), עם "לב האבן", ורואה כיצד נחרב בית המקדש בימיו - הרי היה הופך עולם (געקערט א וועלט)!

אומרת תורת אמת ותורת חיים, הוראה בחיים: קער אַ וועלט היינט!!!

It is stated in the Talmud Yerushalmi that one who did not see the Beis Hamikdash rebuilt is considered as if he saw it destroyed.²⁶ More than nineteen hundred years have passed since the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, but since it was not rebuilt today, we must cry out for the Ge'ulah as if the Beis Hamikdash had been destroyed today . . . Just imagine a hardened Jew with a heart of but stone standing and watching the Temple's destruction play out before his eyes. Even he would be galvanized to turn over the world [to stop the destruction].

The Torah of truth, the Torah of life, issues a living imperative: TURN OVER THE WORLD TODAY.

²⁴ The Rebbe often said that the very possibility that a Jew can think this way is symptomatic of how deeply immersed we are in *Galus* and how desperately we need Mashiach.

²⁵ We chose to present a transcript of the Rebbe's actual words rather than the excerpt from *Toras Menachem*.

²⁶ Yoma 1:1. The actual words in the Yerushalmi are, "כאילו החריבו", as if he actually destroyed the Beis Hamikdash.



May we merit the coming of Mashiach speedily in our days, *amen*.

SUMMARY

The key to living with Mashiach today, as if he were already here, is to learn about Mashiach every day and to fill our minds with thoughts about Mashiach. This generates enthusiasm that uplifts every part of our day. This is the personal obligation of every Jew.

KEY POINTS

1. Our very presence in *Galus* must inspire an intense yearning and a desperate desire for Mashiach. We must await him all day, every day.
2. Expecting Mashiach, even when there are no indications of his arrival, is reason enough for him to arrive.
3. As a natural outcome of this yearning, a Jew prays for Mashiach at every opportunity.
4. If we live as if Mashiach has already arrived, we will hasten his arrival.
5. We are each individually responsible to do all that we can to bring Mashiach.



A VISION *for* MASHIACH

THE REBBE AND THE RAMBAM



LESSON 5
Miracles and Proofs

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 יַעֲלֶה עַל הַלֵּב שְׁבִימוֹת הַמְּשִׁיחַ יִבְטַל דְּבַר מְמֻנְהָגוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם. אוֹ יִהְיֶה שֶׁחֲדוּשׁ בְּמַעֲשֵׂהוֹ בְּרֵאשִׁיתוֹ. אֲלֵא עוֹלָם כְּמֻנְהָגוֹ נוֹהֵג. וְזֶה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בִּישְׁעֵיהָ "וְגַר זֵאֵב עִם כֶּבֶשׂ וְנֹמֵר עִם גְּדִי יִרְבֹּץ" (ישעיהו יא, ו), מִשָּׁל וְחִידָה... וְכֵן כָּל פְּיוּצָא בְּאֵלוֹ הַדְּבָרִים בְּעִנְיַן הַמְּשִׁיחַ הֵם מְשָׁלִים.

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?¹ Moreover, Rambam wrote a lengthy epistle on *Techiyas Hamesim*, to prove that the dead will literally come back to life.² 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,

¹ *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.

² 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.³ In the second stage, all the miracles foretold by our prophets and the Talmud will occur.⁴ With this simple but brilliant suggestion, the Rebbe resolves a question that has bothered Torah scholars for generations.⁵

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:

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

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.⁶ Therefore, Rambam rules

⁶ 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.⁷

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 ובמצוות . . . 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.

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

⁷ 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.⁸

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.

⁸ 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.⁹ 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 הַמְּלֶכָה. וְהוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר עָלָיו שֶׁהוּא הַמְּלֶכָה הַמְּשִׁיחִית. וְדָמָה הוּא וְכָל חֲכָמֵי דוֹרוֹ שֶׁהוּא הַמְּלֶכָה הַמְּשִׁיחִית. עַד שֶׁנִּהְרַג בְּעֹנֹת. כִּיּוֹן שֶׁנִּהְרַג נוֹדַע לָהֶם שֶׁאֵינוֹ. וְלֹא שָׁאֲלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ חֲכָמִים לֹא אוֹת וְלֹא מוֹפֵת.

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.

⁹ 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,¹⁰ 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 דחזיוהו 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."*¹¹ *When they saw that he was unable, they executed him.*

¹⁰ Talmud Yerushalmi, Taanis 4:5; Eichah *Rabah* 2:4.

¹¹ 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 *ta-nug*. 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?¹²
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.¹³ So, how do we reconcile these conflicting narratives?¹⁴

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.¹⁵

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

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

¹³ 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).

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ *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.¹⁹

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.²⁰ He was a valid candidate to be Mashiach, but his personal failings prevented him from fulfilling his destiny.

¹⁹ 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 katalt*, the Romans killed a dead man.

²⁰ *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.²¹ 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).²²

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.

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

²² 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 Umilchamoseihem*, 12:2

לא יחשב הקצין. אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים, "תִּפְּח רִוּחַם שֶׁל מְחַשְׁבֵי הַקְּצִים" (סנהדרין צז ב.). אֲלֵא יַחֲפָה וַיֵּאֱמִין בְּכֹלֵל הַדְּבָר.

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.²³

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

The Rebbe explained:

²³ *Igeres Teiman* chapter 3.

²⁴ 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.²⁵

²⁵ 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 Friediker Rebbe declared that we had entered the era of Mashiach and all that is required of us is *teshuvah*.²⁶ 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.²⁷ 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 והשלמה.

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.²⁸ We no longer need to focus on bringing Mashiach closer; we need to prepare ourselves to greet him.²⁹ As we discussed last week, such preparation

²⁶ The Friediker 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.

²⁷ *Sefer Hasichos* 5748:2, p. 628.

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

²⁹ 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.



A VISION *for* MASHIACH

THE REBBE AND THE RAMBAM



LESSON 6

Life in the Era of Mashiach

I. ABUNDANT TORAH STUDY

INTRODUCTION

We have been on an incredible journey of learning and discovery, about the coming of Mashiach, and today, we have reached the sixth and final station of the journey. Today, we will learn the last two paragraphs of *Mishneh Torah*, in which Rambam describes the changes that will take place in our lives in the era of Mashiach.

When we envision a utopia, we tend to imagine a life filled with all the things that we value and cherish. Sometimes, we think out of the box and imagine a life in which fantastical, yet to be discovered pleasures abound.

Indeed, life in the era of Mashiach will be just that, but it will come with a surprising twist. There will be an abundance of material delights, but we won't value them.

What will we value instead?

TIME TO STUDY

TEXT 1A

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos
Melachim Umilchamoseihem* 12:4

לא נתאוו החכמים והנביאים ימות המשיח. לא כְּדִי שִׁישְׁלוּ עַל כָּל
הָעוֹלָם. וְלֹא כְּדִי שִׁירְדוּ בְּעוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים. וְלֹא כְּדִי שִׁינְשְׂאוּ אוֹתָם
הָעַמִּים. וְלֹא כְּדִי לְאָכַל וּלְשִׁתּוֹת וּלְשִׁמְחָה. אֲלָא כְּדִי שִׁיְהִיו פְּנוּיִן בְּתוֹרָה
וְחֻקֵּי תוֹרָה. וְלֹא יִהְיֶה לָהֶם נוֹגֵשׁ וּמַבְטֵל.

The sages and prophets did not yearn for the era of Mashiach to have dominion over the entire world, to rule over the nations, to be exalted



by the nations, or to eat, drink, and celebrate. Rather, they desired to be free to delve into the Torah and its wisdom without pressure or disturbances.

We will, indeed, be completely free. We will no longer submit to oppressive powers or suffer disturbing grievances. We will enjoy a time of plentiful abundance and we will be free of distraction. But we will care for none of these because we will have something more—the freedom to delve into Torah undisturbed.

QUESTION

Now, the great sages and prophets valued holiness above material pleasures, so we can understand why they will enjoy this opportunity. But most of us enjoy material luxuries and lavish lifestyles. It is hard to imagine that we will enjoy a lifestyle that seems lackluster; cloistered in dusty libraries and immersed in ancient tomes. Will the era of Mashiach be more exciting for some of us than for others?

The answer is no, and here is why:

A DIFFERENT WORLD

TEXT 1B

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, Ibid. 12:5

וּבְאִוְתוֹ הַזְּמַן לֹא יִהְיֶה שָׁם לֹא רָעַב וְלֹא מְלַחְמָה. וְלֹא קִנְיָאָה וְתַחֲרוּת.
שֶׁהַטּוֹבָה תִּהְיֶה מְשַׁפֵּעַת הַרְבֵּה. וְכָל הַמַּעֲדָנִים מְצוּיִין כְּעֶפְרָר.



In that era, there will be neither famine nor war, envy nor competition, for good will flow in abundance and all the delights will be freely available as dust.¹

At first glance, Text 1B doesn't provide any more clarity than Text 1A. But we will discover that, under the Rebbe's treatment, Rambam opens a window to the new and radically improved attitude that we will acquire when Mashiach comes.

Let's break down Text 1B into two sections. First, the list of negative items that will cease, then the positive items that will become prevalent.

FOUR NEGATIVES

Rambam lists four things that will cease in the era of Mashiach:

1. Famine
2. War
3. Jealousy
4. Unhealthy competition

LEARNING EXERCISE

Study this list and try to detect a logical order.

No Spiritual Wars

This includes the absence of spiritual wars, such as jealousy and competition in Torah study. These things only occur when we have an acute sense of self. When we are fully in sync with the Torah, we don't covet another's knowledge, compete for supremacy, or debate for the sake of winning. Our only interest lies in studying and understanding at ever higher levels.

Sefer Hasichos 5749:1, pp. 154–155

¹ We learned last week that Rambam rules that Mashiach need not change the world's natural pattern (though he will indeed do so) because that is not a basic halachic requirement of his coming. Yet, in this section, Rambam describes a miraculous break with the natural pattern. Why is that? The purpose of halachah is to ensure that the affairs of life and the world are conducted according to Hashem's will. Once that is achieved, we ascend to a higher consciousness and realize that we are not separate beings from Hashem, who submit to His will. We are a part of Hashem and don't exist outside of Him. We can only reach this transcendental consciousness after having fully submitted to the Torah and having conducted ourselves in accordance with halachah. Therefore, in the very final halachah, which represents halachah's pinnacle achievement, Rambam briefly describes a world that breaks from its natural pattern and recognizes that it is exclusively in Hashem's domain. *Sefer Hasichos* 5751:1, pp. 101–113.



The Rebbe explains that Rambam groups these four items because one flows from the other. In particular, the Rebbe groups them into two sections. Famine goes with war and jealousy goes with competition. This is because famine is a common cause of war—you go to war because you need something that another has. Jealousy is a common cause of unhealthy competition—you compete with others because you covet something that they have. You don't need it badly enough to go to war, but you want it badly enough to engage in a competition that could be ruinous.

Rambam is telling us that because there will be no famine there will be no war, and because there will be no jealousy there will be no unhealthy competition. Meaning, not only will there be no events that trigger war, there won't be any triggers for unhealthy competition, which is less injurious than war but still a damaging human dynamic. Accordingly, these four items have an inherent flow.

TWO POSITIVES

Next, Rambam lists two positive items that will be prevalent when Mashiach comes:

1. Good in abundance
2. Delights available as dust

LEARNING EXERCISE

Study this list and determine whether these negative items link back to the items on the positive list.

THE LINK

The Rebbe explains that there is a link and he found proof for it in a single word. After listing the negative items, Rambam did not introduce the positive list with the word, “and,” as would be appropriate.



Instead, he used the word, “for.” This tells us that the negative items will cease for—because—the positive items will emerge. Let’s break this down:

TEXT 2

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos*, 27, p. 237

זה שהטובה תהי' מושפעת הרבה שולל מציאות של רעב ומלחמה כי אז הרי יש לכל אדם טובה הרבה ואין צורך במלחמה לשלול שלל וכו', להוסיף ברכושו ונכסיו.

אמנם עדיין אין זה שולל הרגש של קנאה ותחרות. כי ידמה במחשבתו שאפשר יש לחברו טובה שאין יודע אודותה וכיוצא בזה. שזה לא יביאו לידי מלחמה כיון שאינו יודע מה לשלול לעצמו, אבל מרגיש הוא קנאה ותחרות.

ולכן מוסיף הרמב"ם, וכל המעדנים מצויין כעפר. שחשיבות של כל המעדנים תהיה כעפר, דהיינו כדבר שאין בו צורך כלל. ומכיון שכל המעדנים הם אצלו כדבר שאין בו צורך כלל שוב לא שייך שום רגש של קנאה ותחרות בקשר למעדנים.

The fact that good will flow freely precludes the possibility of famine or war. Under such conditions, there is no need to gather loot to increase one's wealth and possessions.

However, this still does not preclude sentiments of jealousy and competition. Even the supposition that others possess treasures that we don't know about, can spark jealousy and competition. We wouldn't go to war over them because we wouldn't know the nature of the treasures, but we would feel jealous.

Rambam, therefore, adds that all delights will be abundant as dust. This means that material delights will seem like dust to us. We will deem them completely unnecessary and, therefore, won't covet or compete for them.



Under the Rebbe's treatment, the two positive items link back to the list of negative items. The first positive item precludes the first two negative items—when good is in abundance, there is no famine, and therefore, no need for war. The second positive item precludes the last two negative items. When delights seem like dust, there is no jealousy or unhealthy competition.

The Rebbe's insight rests on his novel reframing of the words, "delights will be as available as dust." The Rebbe says that it doesn't only mean that they will be plentiful—that was already known from the first item on the list. It also means that we will value them as little as we value dust. When something is plentiful, it loses its allure. For example, gold is precious because it is rare. If it should become abundant, it would lose its value. Similarly, when Mashiach comes, material delights will be so plentiful that they will lose their value.

We can now appreciate that, although many of us prefer lavish lifestyles over a cloistered life of Torah study, this will change in the era of Mashiach. Material luxuries will lose their allure. Things like sprawling estates, luxury yachts, or deep bank accounts, will be meaningless to us. Even if someone has a nicer car or a more beautiful estate, it won't bother us. We won't covet it. Therefore, our only delight will be Torah study.

We must acknowledge that engaging in Torah study, only because we have nothing better to do, is a poor reason to study Torah. In the next section, we will explore a positive and much deeper reason to love Torah study.

SUMMARY

Today, it is difficult to imagine being able to enjoy Torah studies more than material pleasures. When Mashiach comes, material luxuries will be so abundant that we will regard them like dust.

Only Delights

Note that Rambam only writes that good things will be abundant; he does not write that they will be regarded as dust. He only writes that about delights. The reason is that the good things refer to the basic necessities that keep us alive. These will not be regarded as dust. They will flow freely, and we will value them. The extras—the luxuries and indulgences—will be regarded as dust.

Likutei Sichos 27, p. 237



II. SOLE OCCUPATION

PERCEIVING THE INFINITE

Our loss of interest in material luxury will not only be due to their abundance, but also because we will discover something infinitely better. Similarly, our interest in Torah study will not only be due to it being the only remaining delight, but because we will gain an appreciation for higher things.

For example, the reason an adult with a fleet of shiny new trucks doesn't covet a child's toy car is not because he has so many toy cars, rather because as a mature adult, he has discovered something much better. Similarly, when Mashiach comes, we won't covet material delights because we will have something infinitely better. Something that we don't know how to appreciate today, but we'll learn to appreciate with the spiritual maturity that we will gain in the era of Mashiach:

TEXT 3

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos
Melachim Umilchamoseihem* 12:5

וְלֹא יִהְיֶה יַעֲסָק כָּל הָעוֹלָם אֶלָּא לְדַעַת אֶת ה' בְּלִבָּד.

The entire world will have no occupation, but for the sole pursuit of knowing Hashem.

Today, most of us *believe* that the Torah is more valuable than material goods. However, as physical beings, who are unable to relate to the metaphysical and the eternal, we are still tempted by shiny

Even Noahides

Rambam informs us that all the nations will devote their entire day solely to the knowledge of G-d. Jews will pursue this knowledge by studying the entire Torah. Noahides will pursue this knowledge by studying the sections of the Torah that pertain to *Sheva Mitzvos Benei Noach*. However, Jews will reach a superior level of understanding. This is why Rambam concludes that Jews will be great scholars, will know hidden things, and will grasp the knowledge of their Creator.

Likutei Sichos 27, pp. 246–247; *Sefer Hasichos* 5749:2, p. 626



material delights. Studying Torah all day doesn't seem as exciting by comparison.²

When Mashiach comes, the veils will lift and we will perceive spirituality as clearly as we see the physical today. In addition, our senses and perception will be refined and we will come to appreciate the Torah's infinite value. Its allure will become clear to us and we will see just how shallow the tactile pleasures of material life are by comparison. We will experience endless delight in a Torah passage. We will perceive endless pleasure in the divine light that will permeate us. These delights will be so pervasive that we will be unable to value, let alone enjoy, mere material pleasures.

FOR G-D'S SAKE

Let's continue our analysis of Text 3. Rambam writes, "The entire world will have no occupation, but for the sole pursuit of knowing Hashem."

On a basic level, Rambam is telling us that since all good will be abundant and we won't need to work for a living, we will study Torah all day.³ But this doesn't explain why Rambam adds the word "sole." Had he written, "the entire world will have no occupation, but for

² See Rambam's introduction to Chelek: "Know that just as a blind man can form no idea of colors, nor a deaf man comprehend sounds, nor a eunuch feel the desire for sexual intercourse, so the bodies cannot comprehend the delights of the soul. Just as fish do not know fire because they exist ever in its opposite [water], so are the delights of the world of spirit unknown to this world of flesh. Indeed, we have no pleasure in any way except what is bodily, and what the senses can comprehend of eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. Whatever is outside these is non-existent to us. We do not discern it, neither do we grasp it at first thought, but only after deep contemplation . . . It cannot be described, neither can anything be found to compare with it."

³ It is necessary for Rambam to state this even though it seems obvious because halachah requires us to earn our livelihood. This is true even for someone who studies all day—*toraso umnaso*—which will be our status when Mashiach comes. Moreover, when a *talmid chacham* works *lesheim shamayim*, his work is part of his *avodas Hashem*. We might, therefore, assume that earning a livelihood will be required even after Mashiach comes. Rambam, therefore, informs us that this only pertains to when we have needs. When Mashiach comes and the nature of the world will change, we will not be required to work. At that point, Torah study will be our sole occupation. *Likutei Sichos* 27, pp. 238–239.



the pursuit of knowing Hashem,” the point would have been just as clear. The word “sole” seems redundant.

We mentioned, several times, that when even one word in Rambam seems redundant, the Rebbe views it as a window into a much deeper teaching that Rambam wants to share. What does “sole” tell us about the mindset that we will enjoy in the era of Mashiach?

The Rebbe explains:

TEXT 4

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 27, p. 239.

שהעסק בלדעת את ה' עצמו יהי' באופן דלדעת את ה' בלבד. היינו לא לדעת בשביל מטרה אחרת, גם מטרה קדושה כמו לידע את המעשה אשר יעשון ואלה אשר לא תיעשנה, כי אם אך ורק לשם ידיעת והשגת התורה בלבד. לימוד התורה לשמה.

The endeavor to know Hashem will be for the sole purpose of knowing Hashem. There will be no alternative purpose, not even a holy purpose such as to know what halachah requires and what it forbids. Our only purpose will be to know and to understand the Torah; Torah study for its own sake.

There can be many legitimate reasons to study Torah; many of which can benefit us. For example, if we need to give a lecture, we must study to prepare. If halachic questions arise, we study to know what to do. When Mashiach comes, we will study purely for the sake of Torah study—expanding and enhancing our understanding of the Torah.

When we tackle a Torah passage or a Talmudic tract for the sole purpose of uncovering a new angle, a new perspective, or a new depth of understanding, we are not studying for ourselves. We are studying for the sake of the Torah—because the Torah is true, and the truth must be understood, enjoyed, and appreciated in the broadest and deepest way possible.



When Mashiach comes, we will delve into each word of the Torah to elicit deeper layers of meaning and understanding. That will be our sole passion.⁴ We will be excited to wake up every morning and analyze Hashem's words so that we can understand them better, deeper, and more fully.⁵

THE ABOLITION OF FORGETFULNESS

There is still one piece missing from the puzzle. The Rebbe says that we will not study the Torah to know the halachah. Why not? How could we otherwise know the halachah?⁶

The Rebbe provides a fascinating answer:

TEXT 5

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichos* 27, p. 240

ואף שגם אז יהיה קיום המצות, ובמילא צריכים ללמוד כדי לידע את המעשה אשר יעשון בו. הנה לזה מספיק שילמוד פעם אחת כל התורה כולה, היינו כל ההלכות של תורה שבעל פה, ושוב לא יצטרך לעסוק בלימוד זה. כי בימות המשיח, כאשר רוח הטומאה אעביר מן הארץ, אין שכחה.

Producing Revenue

Rambam describes Torah study in the era of Mashiach as an occupation, which is how business endeavors are often described. Rambam uses this word to imply that our purpose in Torah study will be like our purpose in business—to increase revenue. Approaching Torah study like a business means to study for the sole sake of increasing our understanding of the Torah.

Likutei Sichos 27, p. 240

⁴ The fact that we will study, purely for the sake of studying, will also contribute to Torah study being our sole occupation. When something captures your entire heart, it takes over completely. If you do it partially, it likely hasn't captured your entire heart.

⁵ The Rebbe doesn't mention the Torah *chadashah*—the new levels of depth that Mashiach will teach. Apparently, these efforts will be on top of what Mashiach will reveal. We will endeavor every moment of every day to broaden and deepen our understanding of Mashiach's unprecedented teachings.

⁶ *Chazal* (Nidah 61b) tell us that *mitzvos*, as we know them today, will be abrogated in the era of Mashiach. If this is so, it would appear that there will be no need to know the halachah. However, in *Igeres Hakodesh* 26, the Alter Rebbe states that this will only occur in the era of *Techiyas Hamesim* (which will be at a later stage in the era of Mashiach, see Lesson Five). At that time, *mitzvos* will take on a rarified and transcendental guise, which will render contemporary halachah obsolete. However, in the early stages of the era of Mashiach, the *mitzvos*, as we practice them today, will still be in force, which will necessitate knowledge of halachah.



We will still need to observe the mitzvos at that time, and will, therefore, need to study to know our obligations. However, for this it will be sufficient to study the Oral Torah once. There will be no need to study it again because when the spirit of impurity will be removed from the world, there will be no forgetfulness.

Our tendency to forget is an inefficiency in the human system. It is not reflective of a perfect Creator and is only possible because the Creator and His perfection are concealed.⁷ When Mashiach comes and Hashem will be fully revealed,⁸ all imperfections, including forgetfulness, will fall away. Whatever we learn will remain preserved in our memory forever.⁹ Therefore, says the Rebbe, studying the halachah one time will suffice to know right from wrong. All the Torah study that we will do after that will be for the sole purpose of getting to know Hashem, understanding His teachings better, delving into His thoughts, and exploring His depths.

SUMMARY

When Mashiach comes we will perceive the infinite pleasures of Torah study, and by comparison, the shallow allure of material delights. We will study purely for the sake of study, with no personal motive. Our memories will be secure, and what we learn once will remain with us forever.

⁷ *Tanya* 37.

⁸ *Ibid.* 36.

⁹ *Hilchos Talmud Torah LeAdmur Hazaken* 2:10.



THREE ACHIEVEMENTS

Rambam concludes his *Mishneh Torah* by saying:

TEXT 6

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim Umilchamoseihem* 12:5

וּלְפִיכֶן יִהְיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲכָמִים גְּדוֹלִים וְיִוָּדְעוּ דְבָרִים הַסְתוּמִּים וְיִשְׁיִגּוּ דַעַת בּוֹרְאָם כְּפִי כֹחַ הָאָדָם. שְׁנַאֲמַר, "כִּי מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ דַּעַת אֶת ה' כַּמֵּי לַיָּם מְכֻסִּים" (ישעיה יא, ט).

Therefore, Jews will be great scholars, and know hidden matters, and grasp the knowledge of their Creator to the full extent of human capacity. As the passage states: "The world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem as the waters cover the ocean bed" (Yeshayahu 11:9).

In this statement, Rambam tells us that Jews will:

1. Be great scholars
2. Know hidden matters
3. Grasp their Creator

These are in line with everything we learned till now. We will (a) be great scholars because we will study Torah for no alternative purpose, but to enhance—to make great—our understanding of the Torah. Therefore, we will (b) know hidden matters—we will discover many Torah secrets that were hitherto concealed. We will (c) know Hashem because, beyond learning the legal texts of the Torah, we will delve into kabalistic mysticism and come to know Hashem.

The Full Extent

The words, "to the full extent," aren't intended to limit the extent to which we will understand Hashem, but to maximize it. Today, we don't pour every fiber of our being into our studies. Accordingly, we don't understand Hashem to our full potential. When Mashiach comes, we will invest every ounce of energy and effort into our studies. As a result, we will maximize our potential and gain an unprecedented understanding of Hashem.

Likutei Sichos 27, p. 241



TOTAL IMMERSION

Rambam concludes with the passage from Yeshayahu, “The world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem as the waters cover the ocean bed.”

With this, Rambam demonstrates that we won’t just be filled with the knowledge of Hashem, we will be permeated with it. It will become part of us, and we will become part of it.¹⁰

The first half of the passage states that we will be filled with Hashem’s knowledge. This doesn’t tell us that we will be one with this knowledge. A pitcher, for example, can be filled with water to the extent that there is no room for even one more drop. Yet, the water and the pitcher are separate things—one fills the other.

The second half of the passage, “like waters fill the ocean bed,” tells us that we won’t be like a pitcher filled with knowledge. We will be like a seabed covered in water. When you look at the sea, you only see water. You don’t see the seabed, fish, or anything else. All you see is water.

When Mashiach comes, we won’t see humans, animals, plants, and rocks. We will only see Hashem. We won’t perceive ourselves as something separate from Hashem, as someone who is curious about Hashem and, therefore, studies Him. We will see ourselves as part of Hashem.

We will perceive ourselves as particles of G-dly knowledge. Our studies will be so pervasive that we will become them. Our entire identity will be wrapped up in Hashem.¹¹

The Human Grasp

Without the consciousness that we are part of Hashem, we can only grasp the knowledge of Hashem on human terms. When we absorb this consciousness, our minds gain the capacity to grasp Hashem on Hashem’s terms. Nevertheless, as finite beings we will not acquire the full knowledge of Hashem. As Hashem is infinite, so will our knowledge of Hashem expand continuously and endlessly.

Sefer Hasichos 5749:1, p. 153

¹⁰ This section is based on *Likutei Sichos* 27, pp. 241–242; *Sefer Hasichos* 5749:1, pp. 150–153.

¹¹ The Rebbe breaks down the words, “as waters cover the ocean bed,” into three ascending levels of immersion. They are (a) the ocean bed, (b) the waters, and (c) the cover. The ocean bed demonstrates that the world’s purpose is to be a basin that is filled (governed) by G-d’s will, like an ocean bed is a basin for the ocean. The waters shift our focus from the basin to what fills it. Similarly, on this level, the focus shifts from the role of the world as a platform for Hashem’s will, to the will of Hashem that fills the world. Although the focus has shifted to Hashem and the Torah, the lodgings of



At the same time, this won't be a diminution of our identity, but a revelation of our true identity.¹² We will finally perceive the truth of who we are—walking, talking, breathing, and thinking extensions of Hashem.

We can now appreciate that the era of Mashiach won't only be pleasurable for Torah scholars and prophets. Every one of us will experience a metamorphosis, in which we won't care for the things that we yearn for today and will cherish the things that we don't yearn for today. We won't only cherish and pursue them; we will also become them.

CONCLUSION

This coming Sunday, we prepare for two powerful events.

1. Jews around the world will complete the fortieth cycle of daily Rambam study; the Rebbe's initiative to unite all Jews through Torah learning.
2. It will be the twenty-seventh anniversary of Gimel Tamuz.

The confluence of these events is highly fortuitous for many reasons:

the Torah are still in focus, similar to the way the waters inform us of the basin. Waters on their own flow. The fact that they sit still proclaims that they are in a basin.

The cover does not say anything about what is filled and what fills it. It simply states that there is a cover. This represents G-d as He is. Not as He descends to fill the world and not the world as it is filled by G-d's will. But simply G-d as He is, which encompasses all of existence, including His will and the world that He fills. (*Sefer Hasichos* 5751:1, pp 110–112.)

¹² The Rebbe (*Likutei Sichos* 27, pp. 241–242) points out that Chachamim and Reb Shimon Ben Gamliel are in dispute (*Mikva'os* 6:7) over whether one may immerse in a *mikvah* while in contact with a fish. Are fish part of the water or are they a separation between the person and the water? Rabbi Shimon Ben Gamliel rules that since fish live in the water (moreover, *Chazal* (*Chulin* 27b) say that they are created from water), they are part of the water. Now, when you look at fish, you don't see water; you only see fish. Yet, halachah rules that their true identity is water. Accordingly, when one gazes at the ocean and sees no fish, but only water, one sees the fish's true identity. Similarly, when one will gaze upon the world in the era of Mashiach and see only G-dliness, it won't be a nullification of our identity. It will be the revelation of our true identity. Although halachah follows the Chachamim rather than Reb Shimon Ben Gamliel, the Gemara appears to follow Reb Shimon Ben Gamliel in at least one instance (*Zevachim* 22a).



1. The Rebbe instituted, joined, cherished, and contributed to our daily study of Rambam.
2. The final chapters of Rambam, that we will learn on Gimel Tamuz, are about Mashiach and the Rebbe devoted his life to hastening the coming of Mashiach.
3. This year marks thirty years since the Rebbe encouraged us to learn his teachings on Mashiach and distributed the *Dvar Malchus* that contains his *sichos* on Rambam's *halachos* about Mashiach.

For six weeks, we studied the Rebbe's *sichos* on these chapters of Rambam. On Gimel Tamuz, when we will conclude the fortieth cycle of Rambam study and learn the chapters about Mashiach as elucidated by the Rebbe's *sichos*, we will fulfill two of the Rebbe's directives simultaneously: to learn Rambam, and to learn the Rebbe's *sichos* about Mashiach. Doing so, on Gimel Tamuz—the Rebbe's day—and a day associated with *Ge'ulah* (ever since the Friediker Rebbe was liberated on Gimel Tamuz, 5687), will combine three powerful Mashiach energies in a single day.¹³

We pray that this added excitement about Mashiach and our study of Rambam will storm the heavenly gates and bring Mashiach now.

SUMMARY

When Mashiach comes, our Torah study will reach unprecedented levels. We will not only learn about Hashem but recognize that we are part of Hashem: that nothing exists but for Hashem.

¹³ The conclusion of the fortieth cycle is especially poignant because *Chazal* teach us that it takes forty years for a student to fully grasp the teacher's teachings. In the days leading up to Yud Shvat 5750, the fortieth anniversary of the Rebbe's leadership, the Rebbe explained that at the forty-year mark, the student fully assimilates what has been received from the teacher and is transformed to be just like the teacher. At this point, the Rebbe explained, the *nasi hador* arises and announces that it is time to journey forth out of *Galus* and into Mashiach. Just as our ancestors entered *Erets Yisrael* after forty years, so is the forty-year mark a high time for Mashiach to come. The Rebbe adds that *mem* is forty and the final *mem* is sealed shut. This is synonymous with the conditions of *kamayim layam mechasim* in which the knowledge of Hashem will fill us completely, but will be sealed shut—with no prospect of leakage. See *Sefer Hasichos* 5750:1, pp. 250; 255–271. It follows that completing forty years of Rambam study, including the Rambam's teachings on Mashiach, will generate a powerful *Ge'ulah* energy on Gimel Tamuz.



KEY POINTS

1. When Mashiach comes, abundant goodness will preclude famine and war. Delights will be regarded like dust, which will preclude jealousy and unhealthy competition.
2. We will grow to appreciate what's really valuable—spirituality. As such, our sole occupation will be Torah study and we will study purely for the sake of study.
3. Everything we study will be preserved in our memory forever.
4. We will not only know Hashem, but also recognize that we are a part of Hashem.



