

רמב"ם | הלכות מלך המשיח | פרק י"א הלכה ב-ג

From the Rambam's Laws of Moshiach: WEEK 2

MOSHIACH'S REALLY COMING

- ▶ What's the Torah's best proof Moshiach's coming?
- ▶ Does performing miracles prove Moshiach's identity?
- ▶ Will Moshiach make changes to Torah and Mitzvos?



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BACKGROUND



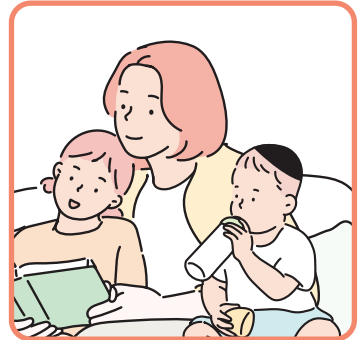
NEW AGE SAGE



CROWN JEWELS



STORY TIME



DVAR MALCHUS



ESSAY



WHAT'S THE TORAH'S STRONGEST PROOF THAT MOSHIACH WILL COME?

THREE PLUS THREE PLUS THREE

When a person does an *aveirah, chas v'shalom*, the severity of his punishment depends whether it was *b'meizid* (on purpose) or *b'shogeg* (by accident). But the Torah teaches us that a person is always responsible for their actions and even a *shogeg* needs *teshuvah*.

If someone kills another accidentally, the family of the murdered person may try to hurt the murderer as revenge. So the Torah chooses certain cities belonging to the *Levi'im* as safe places to run away. The cities are called *Orei Miklat*, which means "cities of refuge." As long as he remains in the *Ir Miklat*, nobody can cause the murderer harm.

The Torah commands us to make nine *Orei Miklat*. *Moshe Rabbeinu* established the first three outside of Eretz Yisroel on the east side of the Yarden River. The next three were established inside Eretz Yisroel after the *Yidden* conquered it with Yehoshua. However, only seven out of the ten Cana'ani tribes were conquered at that time. The land of the remaining three tribes will become part of Eretz Yisroel in the future with Moshiach. The final three *Orei Miklat* will be set up at that time.



רמב"ם הלכות מלכים ומלחמות פרק י"א הלכה ב

Also, an even stronger proof that Moshiach has to come, **with regard to the Orei Miklat, it** (the Torah) **says** in Parshas Shoftim:

When Hashem your G-d will expand your borders of Eretz Yisroel.

The *possuk* continues: Then **you must add three more cities** of *Orei Miklat* in the newly conquered area.

אַף בְּעָרֵי מִקְלָט הוּא אוֹמֵר:

"אִם יִרְחִיב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ

אֶת גְּבֻלְךָ"

"וַיִּסְפֹּף לְךָ עוֹד

שְׁלֹשׁ עָרִים וְגו'

This mitzvah was never yet fulfilled. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu would not give a mitzvah for no purpose. Now, the Rambam explained before how a person who does not believe in Moshiach or await his coming is a *kofer* (denier of Torah). But he also said in the last halachah that he denies the *nevi'im* too.

So: **with regard to the words of the nevi'im** after Moshe **there is no need to bring more proof, for all their seforim are filled with mention of this matter** that Moshiach will come. Indeed, the later *nevi'im* speak about Moshiach and the times of Moshiach in a more open and direct way than the Torah.

וּמַעוֹלָם לֹא הָיָה
דְּבַר זֶה, וְלֹא צְנָה
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
לְתוֹנוּ.

אָבֵל בְּדַבְּרֵי
הַנְּבִיאִים אֵין הַדְּבַר
צָרִיף רְאִיָּה שְׁפָל
הַסְּפָרִים מִלְּאִים
בְּדַבְּרֵי זֶה:

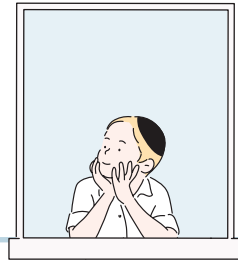
@ LAST

The Rambam brings even more proof from the Torah that Moshiach is indeed coming, connected with the mitzvah of the nine Orei Miklat, of which three cities have never yet been built. Besides Torah, there are plenty of proofs throughout the Nevi'im of Moshiach coming.

NEW AGE SAGE

Why does the Rambam need to bring another proof from the Torah that Moshiach exists and is coming in the future?

Hint: The proofs in Halachah Alef are a part of Bilam's nevuah.



DVAR MALCHUS

One of the basic concepts of Moshiach is that he will bring about *shleimus hatorah*. In *golus*, we can only do some of the mitzvos (369 out of 613), and all the rest can only be performed when the Beis Hamikdash is standing and all *Yidden* settle in Eretz Yisroel. One of the Rambam's proofs that Moshiach must come is that there is actually a mitzvah that was never entirely fulfilled. In the past, we had six *Orei Miklat*, but, really, the Torah tells us to have three more! When Moshiach comes, we will resettle Eretz Yisroel, including the lands that were never in Jewish possession before, and there we will build *Orei Miklat* Numbers Seven, Eight and Nine.

The Rebbe asks, why of all the mitzvos of the Torah, is it specifically *Ir Miklat* that is waiting for Moshiach to come to make it complete?

There is a place, the Torah tells us, where nothing bad can ever happen to you. Even someone who did the most terrible of *aveiros* to a fellow human being—murder!—is safe in the *Ir Miklat*! This is a lesson in every person's life: Every *aveirah* can be considered a mini-death, for it causes the person to be further from Hashem, the source of all life. This distance is corrected with the words of Torah, which serve as an atonement and a protection. In this way, Torah is the *Ir Miklat* for any person, even today.

And just like there is a physical *space* in this world that is “safe”, there is also a *time* when no evil exists. No one is hungry anymore, there is no fighting or jealousy or competition. Does this sound familiar? Yes, this is the time when all the not-good parts of *golus* will be gone, and, free of our *yetzer hara*, we will live peacefully in our own land with *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*, בְּמַהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ מְמוּשׁ.



דבר מלכות סימן ב

The idea of *Orei Miklat*, is simply this:

ענינים של ערי מקלט בפשטות הוא -

...That when a person is in the City of Refuge,
no evil can touch him

...שְׁבִיחַ הַיּוֹת הָאָדָם בְּעִיר מְקַלֵּט,
לֹא יוּכַל לִנְגַע בּוֹ לְרָעָה.

And just as there is an idea of a “safe place”,
so too with time.

וְכַשֵּׁם שֶׁיִּשְׁנֹו עֲנִין הַ“מְקַלֵּט” בְּמָקוֹם,
כֵּן הוּא בְּזָמַן

This is “that time” (meaning, the future with
Moshiach) when “there will be no hunger or war, no
jealousy or competition” (like it says in Navi)

וְהוּא “אוֹתוֹ הַזָּמַן”, שֶׁ“לֹא יִהְיֶה
שָׁם לֹא רָעַב וְלֹא מִלְחָמָה וְלֹא
קִנְיָאָה וְתַחְרוּת”,

We will be sheltered from all the negativity
of the time of *galus*,

שֶׁתִּהְיֶה “קְלִיטָה” מְכַל הָעֲנִינִים
הַבְּלִיתִי רְצוּנִים שֶׁל זְמַן הַגְּלוּת,

And *Yidden* will settle comfortably on their land.

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹשְׁבִים בְּטַח עַל אֲדָמָתָם.

DOES MOSHIACH HAVE TO PERFORM MIRACLES?

SON OF A STAR

It had been more than fifty years since the *Churban* of the second Beis Hamikdash. The Romans were in control of Eretz Yisroel and closed down yeshivos and shuls. They had destroyed the Beis Hamikdash, plowed over Har Habayis and let wild foxes roam the ruins. They even changed the name of the holy city of Yerushalayim and rebuilt it as a Roman city. Most Yidden who survived the fight had been taken in chains into *golus*.

Then one man stood up, gathered a small army and revolted against the Roman conquerors. He was a descendant of Dovid Hamelech, and his name was Shimon. He made the Yidden feel hopeful at a time when they were completely downtrodden. He encouraged them to keep mitzvos, such as *daled minim* and *bris milah*, defying the Roman decrees.

At first, he was very successful. Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest *Tana'im*, along with many other sages of that time, thought that he was Moshiach. He became known as Bar Kochba, which means "son of a star," based on a *possuk* in the Torah that likens Moshiach ben Dovid to a star. There were other leaders who disagreed, and would not support the rebel leader. But so strongly did Rabbi Akiva feel that Bar Kochba was Moshiach, that he paid him the utmost respect by becoming Bar Kochba's arms' bearer (the assistant who carries his weapons into battle).

However, things soon began to go very wrong. Before one of his battles, Bar Kochba called out loudly:

"Hashem, if You choose not to help us, at least do not help our enemies!"

This showed that he thought he was able to conquer the Romans without Hashem's help, *chas v'sholom*, by relying on his own strategies and strength. Soon, another terrible thing came to pass: Bar Kochba suspected that his uncle, Rabbi Elazar HaModa'i, a great *tzaddik*, was not supporting him, and he got angry at him. He kicked Rabbi Elazar so hard, he killed him.

Bar Kochba did take over Yerushalayim for two and a half years, and even minted coins to celebrate his rule. But then he was chased from Yerushalayim and surrounded by Roman forces at the fortress of Beitar. On Tisha B'av, Beitar fell, and he and many Yidden were killed. But even before this took place, the Yidden realized that Bar Kochba cannot be Moshiach and instead began to call him Bar Koziva, which means "the son of a lie."



RABBI AKIVA'S CHOICE

In this *perek*, the Rambam provides clear guidelines to help us determine who Moshiach is (we will see all the details in the next halachah). Today, all *poskim* agree with his ruling. But in the time of the Mishna and Gemara, there were many different opinions: *Is Moshiach a person or a world event? Is he from the living or those who have passed away? Would he perform miracles to show that he is a true messenger of Hashem?*



Rabbi Akiva believed that Moshiach would not have to perform miracles, at least not right away.

He and the other sages pronounced Bar Kochba as Moshiach when he was successful in war against the Romans who had destroyed the Bais Hamikdash. This, along with his *yichus* as a descendent of *Dovid Hamelech*, was enough for Rabbi Akiva.

רמב"ם הלכות מלכים ומלחמות פרק י"א הלכה ג

And it should not come to your mind that the king, Moshiach will need to perform miracles and do wonders in order for him to prove himself to be Moshiach and introduce new things into the world or bring the dead back to life (*techiyas hameisim*) or similar things like these that are supernatural or new in the world, like the fools who take the words of Torah and twist them for their own purposes say. This is surely not so.

We can easily prove this, for Rabbi Akiva was one of the greatest sages of the Mishna, and he (Rabbi Akiva) was an arms-bearer of Ben Kuziva the king. And he would say that he (Ben Kuziva) is the King Moshiach. And he and all the Sages of his generation considered him, Ben Kuziva to be the King Moshiach until he was killed because of sins—at that point, he was *chayav misah* (deserving of death) for causing so many *Yidden* to die in the war. Once he was killed, they realized that he was not Moshiach. And the Sages did not ask of him at any point for a sign or miracle as proof that he was indeed the Moshiach.

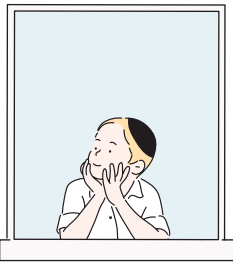
וְאֵל יַעֲלֶה עַל דַּעְתְּךָ שֶׁהַמֶּלֶךְ
הַמְּשִׁיחַ צָרִיךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתוֹת
וּמוֹפְתִים, וּמַחֲדֵשׁ דְּבָרִים בְּעוֹלָם,
אוּ מַחְיֵה מֵתִים, וְכִיּוֹצֵא בְּדְבָרִים
אֵלּוּ שֶׁהִטְפְּשִׁים אוֹמְרִים.
אִין הַדְּבָר כֵּן.

שֶׁהָרִי רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא חָכֵם גָּדוֹל
מִחֲכָמֵי מִשְׁנֵה הָהָא, וְהוּא הָהָא
נוֹשֵׂא כְּלָיו שֶׁל בֶּן כּוֹזִיבָא הַמֶּלֶךְ.
וְהוּא הָהָא אוֹמֵר עָלָיו שֶׁהוּא
הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ. וְדָמָה הוּא
וְכָל חֲכָמֵי דִּירוּ שֶׁהוּא הַמֶּלֶךְ
הַמְּשִׁיחַ, עַד שֶׁנֶּהְרַג בְּעוֹנוֹת. כִּיּוֹן
שֶׁנֶּהְרַג, נוֹדַע לָהֶם שֶׁאֵינּוּ. וְלֹא
שָׁאֲלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ חֲכָמִים לֹא אוֹת
וְלֹא מוֹפְתִים.

NEW AGE SAGE

How could Rabbi Akiva, who was a Talmid Chochom forgo his honor and serve Bar Kochba?

Hint: There are times that a Torah leader is allowed—and must—do things that seem not fit for his kavod.



CROWN JEWELS

וְנָחָה עָלָיו רוּחַ ה'... וְהָרִיחוּ בְּיָרָאתָ ה' Moshiach will have “a spirit of Hashem resting upon him” and he will “smell *yiras Hashem*”, according to the navi Yeshayahu. This means that he will be able to be *morach vada'in*—“sniffing and verifying” whether a person is lying or telling the truth.



At the beginning of the wars of Bar Kochba, all the Sages supported him (as the Rambam says here) but later some of them stopped. One of the reasons was because they tested Bar Kochba to see if he was *morach vada'in* and he couldn't do it.

Why did Rabbi Akiva still believe him to be Moshiach after he failed the test?

The Rebbe explains that Rabbi Akiva and the other sages who continued to believe in Bar Kochba thought that the ability to smell out the truth would come later. They believed that there would be steps and stages to the times of Moshiach. In the first stage, when Moshiach fights the wars and builds the Beis Hamikdash, the world will continue running according to *teva* (nature) and only later will there be miracles (like *techiyas hameisim*), and at that point, they assumed, Bar Kochba would gain the ability of *morach vada'in*.

The Rambam follows the approach of Rabbi Akiva regarding *nissim*, that Moshiach will not need to prove he is Moshiach by changing nature and making miracles, as we can see from these halachos.



WILL MOSHIACH MAKE CHANGES TO TORAH AND MITZVOS?

But rather **the main idea of this matter** of Moshiach is **this: that this Torah, its decrees and its laws, are forever and ever.** This means that **we may not add to them or take away from them.** Anyone who **adds or takes away** from the Torah or its mitzvos or **reveals a new misinterpretation of the Torah, removing the practical acts of the mitzvos,** such as Yoshke, **who were surely wicked and a heretic** (someone who revolts against Hashem). The opposite is actually true—Moshiach will help us do Torah and mitzvos better than ever before!

וְעַקֵּר הַדְּבָרִים כְּכֹה הוּן:
 שְׁהַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת חֻקֶיהָ וּמִשְׁפָּטֶיהָ
 לְעוֹלָם וּלְעוֹלָמֵי עוֹלָמִים. וְאֵין
 מוֹסִיפִין עָלֶיהָ וְלֹא גוֹרְעִין מֵהָ.
 וְכָל הַמוֹסִיף אוֹ גוֹרֵעַ, אוֹ שֶׁגִּילָה
 פְּנִים בַּתּוֹרָה וְהוֹצִיא הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁל
 מִצְוֹת מִפְּשׁוּטָן, הֵרִי זֶה וַדָּאֵי
 בְּדָאֵי רָשָׁע וְאַפִּיקוֹרוֹס:

@ LAST

Moshiach need not perform miracles to prove that he is our redeemer, as we see from Rabbi Akiva, who believed Bar Kochba was Moshiach without performing miracles (though in the end, Bar Kochba sinned and was killed.) The proof for Moshiach is clearly in the Torah and believing that he will come is a basic part of our belief. His coming will not change our practice of Torah and mitzvos, but rather strengthen it. So anyone who does try to implement changes or weaken

our observance, is definitely not the true Redeemer.

The Rambam's halachos about how to figure out who can be Moshiach, including many of the details that we will learn in the next halachah, have helped *Yidden* tremendously. Many times in Jewish history, there were people who proclaimed themselves to be Moshiach, but they were not accepted by the leaders of their generation for various reasons: either they were not descended

from Dovid, or they did not keep the Torah, or they brought about trouble (*lo aleinu*) for the *Yidden*. Some may even have made miracles happen! But, as we see, that is not the most important thing.

When Moshiach will come, miracles and *techiyas hameisim* will occur at some point, but Moshiach himself does not need to make miracles happen in order for us to believe that he is the Moshiach.

ANSWERS TO NEW AGE SAGE

(1) Since things written in the Torah could also just happen *b'ruchniyus*, the Rambam strengthens the proof for Moshiach by showing that it is connected to the fulfillment of a mitzvah. Hashem would never command us to do a mitzvah that we would never be able to perform. By connecting the belief in Moshiach with a mitzvah that must be done but has not yet happened in all of history, we can be doubly assured that Moshiach will come.

(2) Rabbi Akiva carried Bar Kochba's weapons not to show the idea that even a *Talmid Chochom* will Moshiach because he will be so great but because the war was a time of *pikuach nefesh*. Rabbi Akiva was allowed—even obligated—to help win the war and save Jewish lives. (Dovid was a *noseh keilim* for Shaul, and continued to do so even after Dovid knew that he would become a king.)