ב"ה

רמב"ם | הלכות מלך המשיח | פרק י"א הלכה ד

From the Rambam's **Laws of Moshiach: WEEK 3**

WHO IS MOSHIACH?

- **How do we recognize Moshiach?**
- **What will Moshiach accomplish?**
- **What if *Yidden* don't deserve the *geulah*?**

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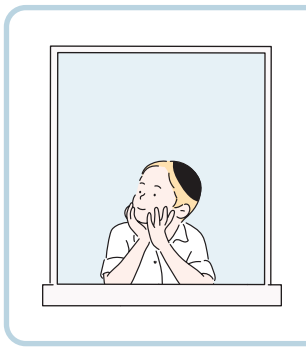
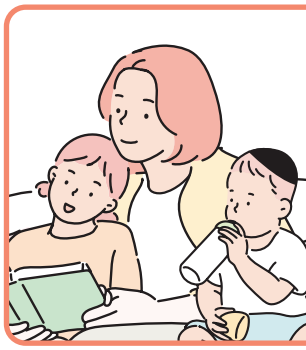
BACKGROUND

NEW AGE SAGE



CROWN JEWELS

STORY TIME



DVAR MALCHUS

ESSAY

HOW DO WE IDENTIFY MOSHIACH?

A DETAILED LIST

In the earlier halachos, we learned about the Torah sources for the *geulah* and Moshiach that show that:

- Moshiach's coming is a basic belief, directly from the Torah
- Moshiach is a human being, a king from Beis Dovid
- Moshiach can come naturally, no miracles needed
- He will bring back all the mitzvos by building the Beis Hamikdash and bringing Yidden back to Eretz Yisroel.

In the following halachah, the Rambam will give us details exactly how Moshiach will accomplish all this. What are the signs that a person is in fact Moshiach? How will he "rise up" and eventually get to the point that he brings the entire world to serve Hashem? To explain this process, the Rambam establishes that there are two stages to Moshiach's accomplishments. The first one takes place during *golus* and the second includes what Moshiach will accomplish at the time when the *geulah* will actually take place.

STAGE 1—חֲזָקַת מָשִׁיחַ

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

וְאִם יַעֲמֹד מֶלֶךְ מִבֵּית דָּוִד הוֹגֶה בַּתּוֹרָה, וְעוֹסֵק בְּמִצְוֹת, כְּדָוִד אָבִיו, כְּפִי תּוֹרָה שֶׁבִּכְתָב וְשֶׁבְּעַל פֶּה.

And when a person who is in the position of a **king, will rise up from the House** (family) **of Dovid** *Hamelech* and fulfills all the requirements listed in this halachah, he is Moshiach. What does he do? **He delves deeply** and toils **in Torah and makes** himself **busy with mitzvos** all the time, **as** did **Dovid his ancestor.** He will not introduce any changes to our traditions, which means he will follow both **Torah Shebichsav** (mitzvos from the Torah) and **Torah SheBal Peh** (mitzvos from the Chachamim, and also the details of performing the 613 mitzvos from Gemara and Halachah). Even as a king, *Dovid Hamelech's* main occupation and concern in both his private and public life was studying Torah and ensuring its mitzvos were being kept properly.

SPIRITUAL WARRIOR

A regular king fights wars and conquers the enemies' land and treasures to be powerful. Moshiach will be a very different type of king. Moshiach's main job is to help us keep Torah and mitzvos perfectly. He will therefore fight *Hashem's* war only to strengthen Yiddishkeit. Even the physical war he fights to conquer Eretz Yisroel is in order to fulfill Hashem's plan of bringing the Beis Hamikdash back to Yerushalayim so *Yidden* can fulfill all the mitzvos. And when all *Yidden* are saved from foreign rulers who have oppressed them, they can study Torah in peace.

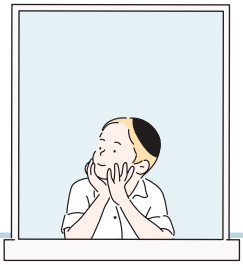
And in addition to being perfect in Torah and mitzvos himself, **he** is concerned with others and **will influence** them to keep to Torah and mitzvos fully, in a way of gentleness, but **firmly**. And will then reach (by himself or through other people and media spreading his teachings) **all of** *Am* **Yisroel to walk in it,** in the way of the Torah and mitzvos. Not only will Moshiach encourage *Yidden* who already keep Torah, but he will **repair the cracks in the observance** and make *baalei teshuvah*—thus reaching each and every *Yid*. **And,** because he is concerned with the safety of *Yidden* and their right to live in all of Eretz Yisroel as promised to them in the Torah, **he will** begin to **fight the wars** for the sake **of Hashem.** The king of *beis Dovid* who occupies himself with all this is **considered to be Moshiach.** As *bechezkas Moshiach,* he does not need to make every *Yid* keep mitzvos completely or win the wars of Hashem.

וְיָכוֹף כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵילֵךְ בָּהּ וּלְחַזֵּק בִּדְקָהּ. וְיִלָּחֵם מִלְחֲמוֹת ה' - הֲרֵי זֶה בְּחֶזְקַת שֶׁהוּא מָשִׁיחַ.

NEW AGE SAGE

How do we know that Moshiach will teach all *Yidden*, regardless of whether they are *shomrei mitzvos* or not?

***Hint**: The Rambam uses two different phrases to talk about Moshiach's influence on* Yidden.



CROWN JEWELS

The Rambam makes it clear that it is completely possible to identify Moshiach while Yidden are still in *golus*. He brings the famous example of Bar Kochba, but Rabbi Akiva was not the only one. Look at this whole Gemara in Sanhedrin! It says, "Who is Moshiach (and how do we know)? Shilo... Yanai...every Rebbe explained how his name (his own name!) was connected to Moshiach in the Torah."

- The students of Rav Sheila said, "His name is Sheila." They prove this from the brachos of Yaakov in *Parshas Vayechi* when Moshiach is referred to as follows: "Until Shilo comes."
- The possuk from Tehillim where it says, "His name is *Yinon* (continuing forever) like the sun," was proof that Rav Yanai is Moshiach.
- Rav Chanina's talmidim found a reference in the *Navi Yirmiyah* for his name.
- Many thought that Menachem ben Chizkiyah was Moshiach: "*Menachem* (the comforter) will calm my soul," it says in Megillas Eichah.
- The Chachamim chose Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi. When he became ill, they proved from *Navi Yeshayah* that Moshiach is a *metzora*.
- Rav Nachman says, "If he is living, he (Moshiach) is like me!" He proved this because *Navi Yirmiyah* says that Moshiach will rule "from among them" (like the Rambam says in this halachah!), but Rav chose Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi.
- Rav also says, "If Moshiach is not from the living, he is like Daniel, who was beloved by everyone."

WHAT WILL MOSHIACH ACCOMPLISH?

SUCCESS!

The Rambam will now describe how we can be certain that the person who is doing many of the things Moshiach is supposed to do is actually Moshiach. These are related to events that will happen once the *geulah* is here.

STAGE 2—מָשִׁיחַ וַדַּאי

If he, this person we consider Moshiach **does** bring all *Yidden* back to Yiddishkeit **and is successful** and then **he wins over all the nations surrounding** Eretz Yisroel and only then he **builds the Mikdash in its** proper **place**, and then after that he **gathers the dispersed of** Am **Yisroel** from around the world were they where sent into *golus*, **he is definitely Moshiach.**

אִם עָשָׂה וְהִצְלִיחַ,
וְנִצַּח כָּל הָאֻמּוֹת שֶׁסְּבִיבָיו,
וּבָנָה מִקְדָּשׁ בִּמְקוֹמוֹ
וְקִבֵּץ נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל -
הֲרֵי זֶה מָשִׁיחַ בְּוַדַּאי.

@ LAST

The four signs that identify someone as Moshiach in golus *(who is* bechezkas Moshiach*) are: (1) he's a king from Dovid's family (2) he's busy with Torah learning and does Mitzvos perfectly (3) he helps* frum *people do mitzvos better and makes more Yidden* frum *(4) fights those who are against Yiddishkeit and are enemies of Eretz Yisroel.*

When he is successful, Boruch Hashem *(as* Moshiach b'vadai*) (1) he makes all* Yidden frum *and (2) he wins Eretz Yisroel back from its occupiers, then (3) he builds the Beis Hamikdash and finally (4) he brings all* Yidden *back to Eretz Yisroel. Now, having fulfilled all these goals, there is* shleimus *in Torah and mitzvos and the* geulah *is here!*

CROWN JEWELS

Wait a minute! Will we fly to Eretz Yisroel on clouds? Will the Beis Hamikdash come down from *Shomayim*? Where are the miracles of the final *geulah* that will be even greater than *yetzias Mitzrayim*?

Many *nevuos* and *midrashim* talk about how Moshiach will come. You probably know a lot of them. But think about it! Some of them contradict each other—and it doesn't seem possible that they will happen at the same time!

The Gemara in Sanhedrin records such a discussion. "How will Moshiach reveal himself?" Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi wonders. "On the one hand, there is a *possuk* in the *Navi Daniel* that says: 'He will fly on a Heavenly cloud.' On the other hand, the *Navi Zechariah* says, 'He will be poor and ride a donkey."

Rabi Alexandri answers: זָכוּ עִם עֲנָנֵי שָׁמַיָּא, לֹא זָכוּ עָנִי וְרֹכֵב עַל חֲמוֹר. If the *Yidden* merit his coming (by doing teshuvah) then he will come with great miracles and noise, flying on a cloud. But if *Yidden* don't deserve it, the process will be natural, and he will ride in on a plain, old donkey.

The Rebbe has told us that *Yidden* have already done *teshuvah* after this long and painful *golus*. We definitely deserve the *geulah* with all the great miracles and revelations! We will fly to Eretz Yisroel, play with once-poisonous snakes, and candies will grow on trees!

But the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* is a work of halachah. He talks about the process of Moshiach in the most natural way possible. If, *chas veshalom*, it would have happened that Yidden were not deserving, Moshiach would still come! This is what has to happen at the time of *geulah*, not what may happen if we are *zocheh*. So he says: "Moshiach doesn't have to perform miracles," and "Moshiach will fight wars with other nations and build the Beis Hamikdash (himself)", all in a natural way.

DVAR MALCHUS

Throughout *Navi* and *Torah sheba'al peh* there are many wonderful descriptions of how great Moshiach will be. The Rambam himself, in other parts of Mishneh Torah has a lot more to say about Moshiach, including: *He will be smarter than* Shlomo Hamelech *and as a* navi *almost as great as* Moshe Rabbeinu*!* Why doesn't he mention them in this halachah?

The answer is that the Rambam is not trying to tell us everything there is to know about Moshiach. This is not a storybook about the *geulah*, to get us excited about what will happen when he comes. This is a ***sefer halachah***, a rule-book on how to behave. The bottom line about Moshiach is that he will bring us back to be able to have *shleimus* of Torah and mitzvos. The only information the Rambam brings in our *perek* is what makes this person qualified to be Moshiach according to halachah. This is what we have to believe. All other descriptions are "extra" and not necessary for us to know about for Moshiach to actually do his job.

דבר מלכות סימן א

The Rambam explains in *Perek Yud-Alef* of *Hilchos Melachim,*	הָרַמְבַּ"ם מְפָרֵשׁ בְּפֶרֶק יא דְּהִלְכוֹת מְלָכִים
Not only about the fact that Moshiach is coming	לֹא רַק אֶת הָעִנְיָן דְּבִיאַת הַמָּשִׁיח
And our obligation to believe in him,	הַחִיּוּב לְהַאֲמִין בּוֹ
But also who he is, what describes him and what he will accomplish (in the area of *shleimus hatorah*) and the process of how he will be revealed	אֶלָּא גַּם מַהוּ עִנְיָנוֹ גִּדְרוֹ וּפְעֻלָּתוֹ וְאֹפֶן הִתְגַּלּוּתוֹ
Then automatically (by studying these facts) it shows what exactly we must believe in.	וּבְמֵילָא - בַּמֶּה מִתְבַּטֵּא הַחִיּוּב לְהַאֲמִין בּוֹ

MITZVOS FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

At *Matan Torah,* Yidden received 613 mitzvos. Seven of these mitzvos must be kept by the nations of the world. They are 1. to have law and order 2. not to curse Hashem. 3. not to serve *avodah zarah* 4. to have a family with a wife and children. 5. not to murder 6. not to steal. 7. not to eat a limb of a living creature.

Thse mitzvos are called the *sheva mitzvos bnei Noach,* since they were given in their entirety to Noach's descendents. (Six of these mitzvos were given to *Adam Harishon* by Hashem, and the seventh mitzvah was added when people began to eat the flesh of animals after the *mabul*.) The nations of the world must obey these laws because Hashem commanded them to do so through *Moshe Rabbeinu* at Har Sinai and not for any other reasons.

Yidden are commanded to publicize these universal mitzvos and encourage non-Jews to keep them. But throughout *golus*, when Yidden were under the oppression of foreign governments, this was not possible. Once Moshiach establishes his kingship, and we have true religious freedom, he, and all *Yidden*, will have an obligation of teaching the nations about these mitzvos. (In fact, the Rebbe says, we should start doing this right now!)

And then **he will then correct the entire world** and everyone in it, including the gentile nations **to serve Hashem together** united in serving Him and no other god, **as it says** in *Navi Tzefaniah:*

For then when Moshiach will come **I will transform the nations** of the world to speak **a purer language** *(lashon hakodesh)*

that they all will call upon the name of Hashem

and serve Him alone **with one purpose.**

וִיתַקֵּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם כֻּלּוֹ לַעֲבֹד
אֶת ה׳ בְּיַחַד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:

כִּי אָז אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל עַמִּים
שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה

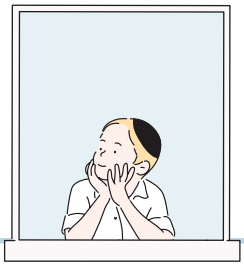
לִקְרֹא כֻלָּם בְּשֵׁם ה׳

וּלְעָבְדוֹ שְׁכֶם אֶחָד.

NEW AGE SAGE

The Rambam writes only one major thing that Moshiach will accomplish that has never happened before in history. What is it?

***Hint**: In the times of Shlomo Hamelech, there was: "Each person under their vineyard and date tree (studying Torah)."*



WHAT IF YIDDEN DON'T DESERVE THE GEULAH?

NOT YET...

There were many *tzaddikim* and Rebbes throughout the generations who were great leaders of Torah. They worked hard to strengthen *Yiddishkeit*. Among them were descendents of *Dovid Hamelech* who were worthy of being Moshiach. Earlier in history, when all *Yidden* were exiled in one place (Bavel), such a leader actually had an official post called *Reish Galusa*.

But at some point it became clear that they would not merit to lead Yidden out of golus. Even though they were doing their "job" as *b'chezkas Moshiach*, Hashem had decided that it was not the right time for the *geulah* to come.

And if he did not succeed to this degree of being an influence over all *Yidden* and fighting for Hashem **or** he was successful but **was murdered** before building the Beis Hamikdash and bring *Yidden* back to *shelimus hatorah,* **it will be known that this is not the one** Moshiach **about whom the Torah promised** who will come and end our *golus*. Instead, this person, **he is** considered **like all the other proper and perfect kings of the family of Dovid who passed away** before the complete *geulah*. **And Hashem only put him in this position** as a potential Moshiach who rises up before the scheduled time for the *geulah*, as **a test** of Emunah **to the many. As it says** in the *Navi Daniel*:

And some of the wise men of the *Yidden*, who will try to calculate the time when Moshiach will come, **will stumble**

Hashem will allow them to make this mistake **to try them, to clarify, and to make it plain** to them that it is not yet the time

they must wait **until the appointed end-time,** though they wish it was sooner

because the time has not yet come. **There is still a lot of time** until the *geulah* will arrive.

וְאִם לֹא הִצְלִיחַ עַד כֹּה,
אוֹ נֶהֱרָג, בְּיָדוּעַ שֶׁאֵינוֹ
זֶה שֶׁהִבְטִיחָה עָלָיו
תּוֹרָה, וַהֲרֵי הוּא כְּכָל
מַלְכֵי בֵּית דָּוִד הַשְּׁלֵמִים
הַכְּשֵׁרִים שֶׁמֵּתוּ.
וְלֹא הֶעֱמִידוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ
בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֶלָּא לְנַסּוֹת
בּוֹ רַבִּים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:

וּמִן הַמַּשְׂכִּילִים יִכָּשְׁלוּ

לִצְרוֹף בָּהֶן וּלְבָרֵר וְלַלְבֵּן

עַד עֵת קֵץ

כִּי עוֹד לַמּוֹעֵד

@ LAST

Once Moshiach is identified (as chezkas Moshiach*), we will observe whether he is successful in building the Beis Hamikdash, bringing* Yidden *back to Eretz Yisroel. If all of these are accomplished, we are sure he is* Melech Hamoshiach *and the* geulah *has actually arrived. But if* Yidden *are not yet deserving of the* geulah *(or we have not reached the last possible opportunity for the geulah to arrive), the Moshiach is not the actual Final Redeemer.*

There are many interpretations of *pessukim*, combinations of letters, words and gematria, especially in *sifrei Kabbalah,* that hint to times that would be perfect for Moshiach to come. These times are called a *ketz* (end-time). If *Yidden* had done *teshuvah*, and been deserving, the *geulah* would have arrived.

What about now? The Frierdiker Rebbe assured us that: "All *ketzim* have passed." In 5751, the Rebbe declared as a *nevuah* that "the time of Geulah has arrived" and showed many signs that the process of *geulah* has begun. We will experience everything that has been promised about the *geulah* (including great miracles!) in our times. We are the last generation of *golus* and the first generation of *geulah*.

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW!

The Chassidim of the Tzemach Tzedek spent the year 5608 in a state of great anticipation and excitement. Many years before, the Alter Rebbe hinted to the fact that Moshiach was coming that year! But the beginning of 5609 arrived, and the *Yidden* of Lubavitch were still living under the oppressive rule of the Czar.

"How could it be that Moshiach isn't here yet!?" fourteen-year-old Reb Shmuel cried to his father.

"Of course, this *ketz* was a very auspicious time," the Tzemach Tzedek told the Maharash. "This past year, Likkutei Torah was printed for the first time!"

The Tzemach Tzedek wasn't just distracting his son with some happy event so that he should feel less disappointed. The publication of his grandfather's Chassidus was not just a consolation prize. You see, just over one hundred years before, there was a Heavenly meeting between Moshiach and the Baal Shem Tov. Moshiach encouraged the Baal Shem Tov to spread his teachings to the greatest degree possible, because the final *geulah* was dependent on Chassidus reaching the furthest corners of the world. So, in a *ruchniyusdike* way, the publication of a major *sefer Chassidus* of the Alter Rebbe was a giant step closer.

"That's not enough!" the Maharash protested. "We all need the physical Moshiach revealed in *this* world!"

CLOSER OR FURTHER AWAY?

Moshiach's main job is to boost Torah and mitzvah performance. Eventually all *Yidden*, and then the nations of the world, will serve Hashem in the best possible way. In Halachah Alef, the Rambam hinted to the fact that anyone who claims to be Moshiach, but does not strengthen our connection to Hashem and Torah, cannot be the true Moshiach. At the end of this halachah, the Rambam brings the example of Yoshka and Mohamed, who regarded themselves as Moshiach (and *navi*). These imposters went on to establish world-famous religions who made lots of *tzores* for *Yidden*. They did not help *Yidden* and uphold the Torah. Instead, their phony claims and twisted teachings brought suffering to *Yidden* and weakened the Torah for many generations, *rachmana litzlan*. This is the exact opposite of what Moshiach is all about!

We can never understand why Hashem caused the terrible persecution of Muslim "cleansing" raids, the Crusades and the Inquisition. But there is a positive outcome, the Rambam concludes. These religions publicized the concept of "Messiah" all over the world, even if they are serving the wrong one!

When the true Moshiach will come, say *nevuah,* and teach the nations the truth of Torah and mitzvos as Hashem commanded it to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, these ideas will not be a new concept to them. It will be easier for the nations of the world to accept and practice their mitzvos.

This last section of the Rambam is not included in this lesson. Do you know that for hundreds of years after the Rambam wrote this part of the halachah, it was erased from Mishneh Torah by non-Jewish censors? They didn't want to spread any negative ideas about their religion. Only newer printings of the Rambam have this text! Can you find it at home?

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In a letter, the Rebbe says: "Even before I went to *cheder*, I would imagine what *geulah* would look like..." Now that you learned about how Moshiach will change the world from a state of *golus* to *geulah*, can you use your imagination to write a detailed description of the process of geulah?

ANSWERS 1. The Rambam uses two ideas to describe how Moshiach will strengthen the observance of all *Yidden* לילך עם לילך בדרך. The second, "fix the cracks" is talking about those who have become assimilated and moved far from Torah. 2. Moshiach will be able to enforce *sheva mitzvos* for all the people in the world. Such a thing never ever happened before. Why? Because there was never a Jewish king that had power over the **entire** world. Moshiach will be the first and only one to have such power. The official "job" of Moshiach is to help the Yidden fulfill all Torah and mitzvos, influence the Yidden to strengthen their Yiddishkeit, fight Hashem's wars and build the Bais Hamikdash. All this actually already happened during the first Bais Hamikdash (but at that time, there were still many nations who served *avodah zarah*)!