



## The Rambam's Conclusion

### Sicha Summary

Chelek 18 | Balak | Sichah 2

#### The Rambam:

Towards the end of “the Laws of Kings” at the end of the *Mishneh Torah*, Rambam writes that “anyone who does not believe in him [Moshiach]... denies not only the statements of the other prophets, but those of the Torah and Moses, our teacher.” He proceeds to offer three sets of proof-texts from the Torah that testify to this fundamental belief:

- a) In *Devarim* (30:3), The Torah testifies to Moshiach's coming when it says, “G-d will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you.”
- b) Reference to Moshiach is also made in the portion of *Balak*, in which Bilaam prophesies about two anointed kings: the first anointed king, David, who saved the Jewish people from its oppressors; and the final anointed king, who will arise from David's descendants and save the Jewish people at the End of Days.

Rambam then proceeds to explain in detail the passage in Numbers 24:17-18. He explains that half of each verse refers to David, and half refers to Moshaich. For example, “‘I see it, but not now’ — this refers to David; ‘I perceive it, but not in the near future’ — This refers to the Messianic king.”

- c) In the following *halacha*, Rambam writes: “Similarly, with regard to the cities of refuge, Deuteronomy 19:8-9 states: ‘When G-d will expand your borders... you must add three more cities.’ This command was never fulfilled. Surely, G-d did not give this command in vain.”

### **The Questions:**

- 1) Why does Rambam, in a book of law, need to produce a lengthy scriptural analysis to show that the Torah spoke of two Moshiachs, David and the future redeemer? Wouldn't it have been sufficient for Rambam to quote the segment of the verse that speaks of Moshiach? Why is King David relevant here at all?
- 2) Why does Rambam place the proof from the cities of refuge in a separate *halacha*?

Several more questions on Rambam's language are advanced. Due to space constraints, we will summarize only the central question and explanation.

### **The Explanation:**

Rambam placed the Laws of Kings at the end of his fourteen-volume corpus of Jewish law, even though chronologically the first thing the Jewish people are commanded to do upon entering the land of Israel is to appoint a king (*Hilchot Melachim* 1:1), to stress the fact that the culmination and completion of the Jewish faith is only possible with a king at the helm. Only with a king can the Jews wage mandatory wars, can the Temple be built, and can the Jews fulfill all laws relating to the land.

For the same reason, the laws of Moshiach are placed at the very end of the Laws of Kings — only with the coming of Moshiach will the Jews be able to fulfill the entire Torah.

Practically, the first king to do this was King David. Moshiach completes the process begun by King David.

The *halachic* definition of Moshiach, then, is a person who brings the observance of Torah to completion. This is why it was necessary for Rambam to document the Torah's testimony about David and the final Moshiach; he brings this comparison as evidence that the role of Moshiach is to return the world to the perfection of David's reign.

Moshiach, however, will not only return the world to David's perfection; he will improve upon it as well, bringing to fruition *mitzvot* that were impossible to fulfill until his coming, such as the addition of three cities of refuge. Because this is an added layer of Moshiach's perfection, it is placed in a separate *halacha*.

### **The Details:**

In *halacha* 4, Rambam details four tasks Moshiach has to achieve:

- a) "If a king will arise from the House of David who diligently contemplates the Torah and observes its mitzvot..."
- b) he will compel all of Israel to walk in the way of the Torah...
- c) he will fight the wars of G-d...
- d) he will then improve the entire world, motivating all the nations to serve G-d together...."

In his lengthy scriptural reading about David and Moshiach, Rambam identifies a prophecy about each of these accomplishments.

- a) Moshiach's existence itself — "I perceive it, but not in the near future' — This refers to the Messianic king."
- b) His influence on the Jewish people — "and a staff shall arise in Israel' — This refers to the Messianic king."

c) His ability to contend with the nations — “decimating all of Seth's descendants’ — This refers to the Messianic king.”

d) His perfection of the entire world — “Seir will be inherited’ — this refers to the Messianic king.”

“Inheritance” of the land, as opposed to “decimating” the land in warfare, implies a willful recognition of G-d’s reality. Moshiach will not only subdue the enemies, he will uplift them so they, too, “serve G-d together.”