

Rambam's Laws of Kings and Wars Chapters Eleven and Twelve

1. In the future, the Messianic king will arise and renew the Davidic dynasty, restoring it to its initial sovereignty. He will build the Temple and gather the dispersed of Israel.

Then, in his days, the observance of all the statutes will return to their previous state. We will offer sacrifices, observe the Sabbatical and Jubilee years according to all their particulars as described by the Torah.

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 Moses, our teacher. The Torah testified to his coming, as Deuteronomy 30:3-5 states:

God 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, God will gather you up from there... and bring you to the land....

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 Bilaam who prophesies about two anointed kings: the first anointed king, David, who saved Israel from her oppressors; and the final anointed king who will arise from his descendants and save Israel in the end of days. That passage Numbers 24:17-18 relates:

'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;

'A star shall go forth from Jacob' - This refers to David;

'and a staff shall arise in Israel' - This refers to the Messianic king;

'crushing all of Moab's princes' - This refers to David as II Samuel 8:2 relates: 'He smote Moab and measured them with a line;'

'decimating all of Seth's descendants' - This refers to the Messianic king about whom Zechariah 9:10 prophesies: 'He will rule from sea to sea.'

'Edom will be demolished' - This refers to David as II Samuel 8:6 states 'Edom became the servants of David;'

'Seir will be destroyed' - this refers to the Messianic king as Ovadiah 1:21 prophesies: 'Saviors will ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esau....'

2. Similarly, with regard to the cities of refuge, Deuteronomy 19:8-9 states: 'When God will expand your borders... you must add three more cities.' This command was never fulfilled. Surely, God did not give this command in vain.

There is no need to cite proofs from the works of the prophets for all their books are filled with mention of this matter.

3 . One should not presume that the Messianic king must work miracles and wonders, bring about new phenomena in the world, resurrect the dead, or perform other similar deeds. This is definitely not true.

Proof can be brought from the fact that Rabbi Akiva, one of the greater Sages of the Mishnah, was one of the supporters of King Bar Kozibah and would describe him as the Messianic king. He and all the Sages of his generation considered him to be the Messianic king until he was killed because of sins. Once he was killed, they realized that he was not the Mashiach. The Sages did not ask him for any signs or wonders.

The main thrust of the matter is: This Torah, its statutes and its laws, are everlasting. We may not add to them or detract from them.

4. If a king will arise from the House of David who diligently contemplates the Torah and observes its mitzvot as prescribed by the Written Law and the Oral Law as David, his ancestor, will compel all of Israel to walk in (the way of the Torah) and rectify the breaches in its observance, and fight the wars of God, we may, with assurance, consider him Mashiach.

If he succeeds in the above, builds the Temple in its place, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is definitely the Mashiach.

He will then improve the entire world, motivating all the nations to serve God together, as Tzeephaniah 3:9 states: 'I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one purpose.'

If he did not succeed to this degree or was killed, he surely is not the redeemer promised by the Torah. Rather, he should be considered as all the other proper and complete kings of the Davidic dynasty who died. God caused him to arise only to test the many, as Daniel 11:35 states: 'And some of the wise men will stumble, to try them, to refine, and to clarify until the appointed time, because the set time is in the future.'

Jesus of Nazareth who aspired to be the Mashiach and was executed by the court was also alluded to in Daniel's prophecies, as ibid. 11:14 states: 'The vulgar among your people shall exalt themselves in an attempt to fulfill the vision, but they shall stumble.'

Can there be a greater stumbling block than Christianity? All the prophets spoke of Mashiach as the redeemer of Israel and their savior who would gather their dispersed and strengthen their observance of the mitzvot. In contrast, Christianity caused the Jews to be slain by the sword, their remnants to be scattered and humbled, the Torah to be altered, and the majority of the world to err and serve a god other than the Lord.

Nevertheless, the intent of the Creator of the world is not within the power of man to comprehend, for His ways are not our ways, nor are His thoughts, our thoughts. Ultimately, all the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth and that Ishmaelite who arose after him will only serve to prepare the way for Mashiach's coming and the improvement of the entire world, motivating the nations to serve God together as Tzeephaniah 3:9 states: 'I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one purpose.'

How will this come about? The entire world has already become filled with the mention of Mashiach, Torah, and mitzvot. These matters have been spread to

the furthest islands to many stubborn-hearted nations. They discuss these matters and the mitzvot of the Torah, saying: 'These mitzvot were true, but were already negated in the present age and are not applicable for all time.'

Others say: 'Implied in the mitzvot are hidden concepts that can not be understood simply. The Mashiach has already come and revealed those hidden truths.'

When the true Messianic king will arise and prove successful, his position becoming exalted and uplifted, they will all return and realize that their ancestors endowed them with a false heritage and their prophets and ancestors caused them to err.

Chapter 12

1. Do not presume that in the Messianic age any facet of the world's nature will change or there will be innovations in the work of creation. Rather, the world will continue according to its pattern.

Although Isaiah 11:6 states: 'The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the young goat,' these words are a metaphor and a parable. The interpretation of the prophecy is as follows: Israel will dwell securely together with the wicked gentiles who are likened to a wolf and a leopard, as in the prophecy Jeremiah 5:6: 'A wolf from the wilderness shall spoil them and a leopard will stalk their cities.' They will all return to the true faith and no longer steal or destroy. Rather, they will eat permitted food at peace with Israel as Isaiah 11:7 states: 'The lion will eat straw like an ox.'

Similarly, other Messianic prophecies of this nature are metaphors. In the Messianic era, everyone will realize which matters were implied by these metaphors and which allusions they contained.

2. Our Sages taught: "There will be no difference between the current age and the Messianic era except the emancipation from our subjugation to the gentile kingdoms."

The simple interpretation of the prophets' words appear to imply that the war of Gog and Magog will take place at the beginning of the Messianic age. Before the war of Gog and Magog, a prophet will arise to inspire Israel to be upright and prepare their hearts, as Malachi 3:22 states: 'Behold, I am sending you Elijah.'

He will not come to declare the pure, impure, or to declare the impure, pure. He will not dispute the lineage of those presumed to be of proper pedigree, nor will he validate the pedigree of those whose lineage is presumed blemished. Rather, he will establish peace within the world as ibid. 3:24 continues: 'He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.'

There are some Sages who say that Elijah's coming will precede the coming of the Mashiach. All these and similar matters cannot be definitely known by man until they occur for these matters are undefined in the prophets' words and even the wise men have no established tradition regarding these matters except their own interpretation of the verses. Therefore, there is a controversy among them regarding these matters.

Regardless of the debate concerning these questions, neither the order of the occurrence of these events or their precise detail are among the fundamental principles of the faith. A person should not occupy himself with the Aggadot and homiletics concerning these and similar matters, nor should he consider them as essentials, for study of them will neither bring fear or love of God.

Similarly, one should not try to determine the appointed time for Mashiach's coming. Our Sages declared: 'May the spirits of those who attempt to determine the time of Mashiach's coming expire!' Rather, one should await and believe in the general conception of the matter as explained.

3. During the era of the Messianic king, once his kingdom has been established and all of Israel has gathered around him, the entire nation's line of descent will be established on the basis of his words and the prophetic spirit which will rest upon him, as Malachi 3:3 states: 'He shall sit as a refiner and purifier.'

He will purify the lineage of the Levites first, stating 'He is a priest of defined lineage. He is a Levite of defined lineage.' Those whose lineage he will not recognize will be lowered to the status of Israelites. This is implied by Ezra 2:63: 'The governor said to them: 'They should not eat of the most holy things until a priest arises who will wear the urim vitumim.' From this verse, you can infer that the prophetic spirit will be used to define and notify the pedigree of lineage.

When he defines the lineage of the Israelites, he will make known their tribal lineage alone, stating: 'He is from this tribe and he is from another tribe.' He will not, by contrast, state concerning a person who is presumed to be of unblemished lineage: 'He is illegitimate or he is of slave lineage.' For the law is once a family has become intermingled with the entire Jewish people, they may remain intermingled.

4. The Sages and the prophets did not yearn for the Messianic era in order to have dominion over the entire world, to rule over the gentiles, to be exalted by the nations, or to eat, drink, and celebrate. Rather, they desired to be free to involve themselves in Torah and wisdom without any pressures or disturbances, so that they would merit the world to come, as explained in Hilchot Teshuvah.

5. In that era, there will be neither famine or war, envy or competition for good will flow in abundance and all the delights will be freely available as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know God.

Therefore, the Jews will be great sages and know the hidden matters, grasping the knowledge of their Creator according to the full extent of human potential,

as Isaiah 11:9 states: 'The world will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the ocean bed.'

This completes Hilchot Melachim and the entire text. Blessed be He who spoke and the world came into being as a whole, with all its particulars.

This concludes the fourteenth book, the Book of Judges. It contains five Halachot and eighty one chapters.

Hilchot Sanhedrin - 26 chapters,

Hilchot Edut - 22 chapters,

Hilchot Mamrim - 7 chapters,

Hilchot Evel - 14 chapters,

Hilchot Melachim - 12 chapters.

In the entire text, there are 83 Halachot and 982 chapters. Complete and perfect with praise to God, Creator of the World