

*Yimot HaMashiach*

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*Yimot hamashiach* (Days of the Mashiach), like many popular terms, is frequently used and just as often little understood. Yeshayahu describes it in this manner in the *haftorah* for the last day of Pesach:

And a wolf shall live with a lamb, and a leopard shall lie with a kid; and a calf and a lion cub and a fatling [shall lie] together, and a small child shall lead them. And a cow and a bear shall graze together, their children shall lie; and a lion, like cattle, shall eat straw. And an infant shall play over the hole of an old snake and over the eyeball of an adder, a weaned child shall stretch forth his hand. (11:6-8, translation, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*)

Shmuel (165-257 C.E.), known as one of the greatest Talmudic Sages, understands these *pasukim* in a metaphoric sense. As such, instead of a world wherein the instinctual behaviors of the animal kingdom will be radically altered, we will be blessed to live in a time when our people will be free from the yoke of our oppressors: “There will be no difference between our world and the days of the Messiah except for the cessation of the domination of the kingdoms of the world [over the Jewish people].” (*Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 99a*, translation and brackets my own) Thus, for Shmuel, *yimot hamashiach* will be a time of complete socio-political freedom for the Jewish people.

In his halachic *magnum opus*, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim* 11:1 and 12:1 and 2, the Rambam (1135-1204) elucidates Shmuel’s position in this fashion:

King Messiah will arise in the future and return the kingship of David to its former greatness and glory. He will rebuild the Holy Temple and gather all of the exiles to the Land of Israel. All of the laws will be in effect during his days just as they were in earlier times. We will [once again] offer *korbanot* (animal offerings) and keep the laws of the

Sabbatical and Jubilee years just like all of the other laws stated in the Torah.

One ought not to think that in the days of the Messiah anything will change in the nature of the world (*m'minhago shel haolam*), or that there will be some new creation within nature (*b'ma'aseh Bereishit*). Rather, the world will continue in its normal fashion. The passage in Yeshayahu that states “And a wolf shall live with a lamb, and a leopard shall lie with a kid...” is merely a metaphor. Rather, it really means that the Jewish people will live in comfort and without fear of the evil non-Jewish nations who are symbolically represented by the terms “wolf” and “leopard.”

Our Sages stated: “There will be no difference between our world and the days of the Messiah except for the cessation of the domination of the kingdoms of the world [over the Jewish people].” (Translation, underlining, and brackets my own)

One is immediately struck by the purely naturalistic position taken by the Rambam. The reinstatement of the Davidic monarchy “to its former greatness and glory” in the person of the true Messiah is the necessary and fundamental criterion for the achievement of all other Jewish eschatological goals. “Former greatness and glory” refers to uncontested Jewish hegemony over our own G-d-promised land. Pragmatically, it means that the unending political pressures faced by the modern State of Israel will cease. Moreover, since all countries will recognize our beloved nation as Hashem’s unique dwelling place among humankind, it will be preeminent in the world. This will be a natural result of the nations of the world “returning to the true faith,” that is, monotheism (12:5).

Once we are politically free and no longer beholden to any earthly power, the *Melech Hamashiach* will “rebuild the Holy Temple and gather all of the exiles to the Land of Israel.” The *Anshei Keneset HaGadolah* (Men of the Great Assembly) gave powerful voice to these aspirations in two *brachot* of the *Shemoneh Esrei*:

And may You return to Your holy city in mercy, and dwell therein as You have spoken. And may You build it soon and in our days as a permanent construction. And may the throne of King David rapidly be re-established therein. Blessed are You Hashem, He who builds Jerusalem.

Sound the great shofar [whose clarion call] declares our freedom. And raise up our standard

to gather around all of our exiles and gather us all together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are You Hashem, He who gathers the exiles of His people Israel. (Translation and brackets my own)

May this Pesach be the time wherein these *tefilot* will be answered. *V'chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom and *Chag Kasher v'Sameach*

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