12th PRINCIPLE: When is the Messiah supposed to come?

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We continue to explore the views of Maimonides on the subject of the Messianic era. Yesterday we explained that, according to the tradition we received from our sages, in the times of the Messiah humanity will "discover the existence of HaShem ", all Jews will live in Israel, with our Bet haMiqdash built and at peace with our neighbors (see here what we wrote yesterday).

But what about the other details of the days of Mashiah? Will there be a war between Gog and Magog? And who is Gog and who is Magog? And most importantly, when is the Messiah really coming?

Maimonides explains that these and other similar questions about the Messianic times are beyond our knowledge, **because there is NO oral tradition that has been received on these issues** (beyond what we explained yesterday). And although the prophets spoke of the times of Mashiah, and the Rabbis of the Gemara also discussed the issue, the prophets spoke in metaphors or with names that we cannot identify, and the Rabbis of the Gemara, aware of this limitation, only expressed their personal interpretations about these texts. There was no consensus among them and the Gemara deliberately did not arrive to any conclusion on these issues, but leave this issue open.

Consider the words of Maimonides:

Hilkhot Melachim 12: 2: *"It seems from what we read in the*

writings of the prophets [= ie there is no oral tradition received about the meaning of these texts YB] that at the beginning of the messianic age will be a war between Gog and Magog, and that before the war of Gog and Magog a Prophet will come to correct the people of Israel and prepare their hearts …. and these issues, and all similar topics [details of the Messianic times] will not be known by people until they actually happen, since the Prophets did not write explicitly about it and our Sages did not receive an oral tradition (□□□ □□□ □□□□□□ □□□□ □□□ □□□ □□□□□□) on this subject. What the sages say about it's just what they interpret from what they read in verses, so [in the Gemara] there is no definitive conclusion on these issues … ".

I think, first, that these words of HaRambam, constitute a monumental testimony to the credibility of our oral tradition, to the integrity and intellectual honesty of our Hakhamim.

Second, we now understand why the opinions of the rabbis about the signs that will anticipate the coming of Mashiah are so many and often contradictory. Because in this issue, their views are speculative, and as we said, the Gemara left this matter unsettled.

HaRambam also says in the next Halakha that issues relating to the Messiah should not be the subject of intense study, since in the absence of a definite tradition, it will be just speculative. And this speculative study will not contribute to our spiritual growth:

"[And since there is no tradition in these matters] a person should not, therefore, be heavily involved in the analysis of Haggadot [= the parables of the Rabbis] and Midrashim [= interpretations of the rabbis] in these matters because learning from these materials will not lead a person to increase his love or fear for God. "

Finally Maimonides refers to the question of timing: when will

the Messiah come? This is also an matter for which we have no oral tradition. Moreover, this theme is particularly sensitive because several times in Jewish history, when someone said that the Mashiah will be coming in such or such day or in such or such year, it caused enormous damage to the people of Israel, as happened for example in 1666, with the false Messiah Shabbetai Tsebi, and many other times.

Maimonides says, paraphrasing the words of the Talmud:

"Similarly, one should refrain from calculating when the Messiah will come. Our sages have warned us about this negative practice saying. 'May the souls of those who calculate the coming of the Messiah be destroyed [for the damage they cause to Jewish people]. You just have to hope and believe that the Messiah will come, as we have explained. "

So, in conclusion, when will the Messiah come?

To answer this question I would like to share with the readers the old Sephardic greeting, before one goes to sleep.

Among the Sephardim it was very common to greet each other, among friends or even among parents and children, saying at night, "BETOB TALINU", which roughly means, "May you sleep well." But the most interesting was the second part of this salutation, the mandatory answer to this greeting: "TAQUISU BISHU'AT HASHEM" which means, "May you wake up with the redemption of HaShem" that is, "I wish you to wake up tomorrow finding that the redemption of HaShem has already begun. " So every night, before going to sleep every Jew would express his or her EMUNA TEMIMA, the hope and perfect faith, that B'H the next day, upon awakening, the Messiah will be already here.

I believe this simple greeting captures, better than any philosophical disquisition, the essence of what Maimonides

wrote about when the Messiah will come.