

**הרב חיים דרוקמן**  
**Rabbi Chaim Drukman**

# **קִמְעָא קִמְעָא**



# **Step by Step**

**The State of Israel - Fulfilling the Vision of Our Redemption**  
**מדינת ישראל - התגשמות חזון גאולתנו**

**KIM'A KIM'A**

**STEP BY STEP**

*The State of Israel —  
Fulfilling the Vision of Our Redemption*

by

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Excerpt from Book 1, Chapter 4

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# Book 1, Chapter 4

## *Yearning for Redemption*

### **Practical Aspects of the Redemption**

We have seen that the first stage of redemption is the ingathering of the exiles into the Land, while the earth from its side yields its fruits in abundance to its inhabitants. We can now get a view of how the main process of redemption begins to take shape.

We begin with the final words of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi,:

*You will rise up and have mercy on Zion, for the time for favor has come, the appointed hour has arrived. Your servants cherish its stones, and they have pity on its dust.* (Tehillim 102:14-15). This means that Jerusalem will indeed be rebuilt when Bnei Yisrael yearn for it as hard as can be, such that they will look favorably even on its stones and its dust.

*Kuzari 5:27*

“Jerusalem will indeed be rebuilt” – When will Eretz Yisrael be rebuilt? “When Bnei Yisrael yearn for it” – when the nation of Yisrael yearns “**as hard as can be**” to return to the Land. This extreme form of yearning will be expressed in physical actions and not merely as spiritual desires. The people will literally “cherish its stones and have pity on its dust.”<sup>1</sup>

The source of the words of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi is in the verses that he quotes: When will “You rise up and have mercy on Zion?” When will “the time for favor” come, when will “the appointed hour” arrive? It will be when Yisrael begin to express their yearning in a practical way – when *Your servants cherish its stones, and they have pity on its dust.*

A similar idea appears in the commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Chaim Ben Atar:

Redemption will come when the hearts of men awaken, and when they will say to them: Is it good for you to live outside, exiled from your Father’s table...?

*Or Hachaim, Vayikra 25:25*

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<sup>1</sup> The SHELAH also discusses this issue (Book of Letters, the Letter Kuf, “The Sanctity of the Place,” 458):

“He (the author of *Sefer Chareidim*) also wrote the following (Chapter 59, page 60): “**Every man of Yisrael must love Eretz Yisrael and come there from the far ends of the earth with great yearning, like a son comes to his mother.** For the beginning of our sin, which led to weeping for all generations, was because we despised it, as is written, *They despised the desirable Land* (Tehillim 106:24). And with respect to our redemption (let it come soon), it is written, *Your slaves cherish her stones, and they have pity for her dust.* And, *You will rise up and have mercy on Zion.*”

When will the redemption come? When “the hearts of men awaken” – when Yisrael will wake up and reach the understanding that the reality of exile is intolerable,<sup>2</sup> at the moment when they are not ready to remain far away, “exiled from your Father’s table.” Thus, we see that the matter depends on the nation of Yisrael, and it is up to us to wake up.

Rabbi Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal decisively emphasizes the need for a practical awakening:

Do not be so quick to conclude that we should sit back and do nothing about redemption, and that we should wait for Mashiach to come and carry us off on the wings of eagles to our Land and our inheritance...

*Eim Habanim Semeichah* (translated by Moshe Lichtman), page 268

Rabbi Teichtal wants to rid us of the mistaken notion that the proper attitude toward redemption is to “sit back and do nothing,” that it is enough to wait patiently for Mashiach to come and redeem us. Such an idea was prominent among the people during his lifetime.

Many of our fellow Jews, **even rabbis and gedolei Torah**, imagine that the redemption will occur in this way. One great rabbi even preached in public that we must not act at all, not even to build and settle the Land. Rather, we must wait for Mashiach to swoop down and carry us to Eretz Yisrael on clouds.

Not only do “many of our fellow Jews” think this way, even rabbis and Torah scholars do! And what led them to think this way? What source did a “great rabbi” have for this approach, what basis did he have?

He came to this conclusion because **he did not delve deeply into this halacha**, which is one of the deepest and most obscure halachot... He who does not delve deeply into it has no grasp on it whatsoever!

For example, one who did not study the *Yoreh Dei'ah* in the TUR is not capable of making halachic rulings on permitted foods. He might indeed be a Torah scholar, but how can he make an intelligent ruling in a subject area that he did not study? What is his source of knowledge? This does not mean that he is not a Torah scholar, rather that he was never involved in a specific area of halacha, and how then can he be expected to know it? The same is true of anybody who did not study in depth the laws related to the Land – How will he know how to rule on such matters? Although his lack of knowledge in these realms truly detracts from his greatness, overall he still is a Torah scholar.

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<sup>2</sup> This is similar to what *Chidushei HaRim* writes (at the beginning of the Torah portion of Va'eira): “*And I will take you out of the suffering of Egypt* (Shemot 6:6) – The first redemption is a result of their despising the exile, but as long as they can still tolerate the exile the redemption cannot come. *And I will take you out of the suffering of Egypt* – This means, I will remove from you the will to tolerate Egypt, and I will make you despise the exile, so that you will no longer tolerate it.”

As an example, I once turned to a prominent rabbi, a tremendous Torah scholar, about a very complicated question. He said to me, "I am the head of a yeshiva. Ask me how to understand a commentary of the Tosafot, I will be happy to answer you. But about your question, please ask So-and-so, who is deeply involved in such matters. I am sure that he will be able to advise you." His point was that a man can be a great scholar but if he has not studied a specific subject and has not been involved in it – he cannot make a serious ruling.

It is important to emphasize this point, since quite often when we are discussing the subject of redemption people tend to ask: "Doesn't Rabbi So-and-so know all about this?? And what about another rabbi, doesn't he know??" The answer is simple: If they have not been involved, how could they know the answers? This is especially so for this topic, since one cannot learn all about the redemption of Yisrael from a short paragraph in the *Shulchan Aruch*. Rather, one must gather together information from many sources to slowly build up the full and correct understanding.

Rabbi Teichtal continues:

I will cite a proof for this from a "Tana," the righteous Kabbalist, the Sephardic scholar mentioned above (Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai):

Do not entertain the thought that the end and the redemption... and the coming of Mashiach are the same thing, and that they will all occur simultaneously, in one day. Actually, they are separate things. Each one has its own time and boundary...

He who says that Mashiach Ben David will initiate the redemption, as the lowly masses anticipate, is like someone who says that the sun will rise before dawn. Nonsense! The great evil that arises from this harmful outlook is tangible, as experience proves.

It is a mitzva to publicize this matter to the ignorant, and blessed is he who sanctifies God's name among the multitudes. In my opinion, he who hides this matter desecrates God's name in private...

Redemption comes through an established process, and it is important for us to follow the proper sequence of events. We must start with our own yearning for redemption, and this must be expressed in practical terms, not as one who sits on the sidelines, waiting for Mashiach to come and redeem us one day.

### **"The Appointed Hour has Arrived"**

The national awakening, the yearning for redemption within Yisrael, in a large and significant practical way, is a sign that "the appointed time has arrived." It is valid testimony of this fact.

The fact that the nation of Yisrael did not “awaken” a thousand or even five hundred years ago but only a few generations ago is a sign that there was an “*atra'uta d'le'eila*” – an awakening from above – that was mirrored by an “*atra'uta d'letata*” – an awakening from below – consisting of practical steps that we have taken, specifically in our generation.

The nation of Yisrael remained connected to its Land and anticipated the redemption throughout all the generations, without any exception. Yisrael remained very closely linked to the Land. However, this anticipation was far from reality, and it did not have any practical consequences. In all the generations, the people continued to believe in redemption – but this faith did not lead to any practical steps. The fact that in recent times Yisrael awakened and acted with the goal of transforming the vision of redemption into reality shows that there has been a parallel Divine awakening for the redemption of Yisrael.

The following was written by Rabbi Baruch Epstein in his book, *Torah Temimah*. (His father was Rabbi Yechiel Mechel Epstein, who wrote *Aroch Hashulchan*). Rabbi Baruch comments on the verse,

*He set out a net at my feet* (Eichah 1:17). Rabbi Abba Bar Kahaneh said: If you see benches full of Babylonians set out in Eretz Yisrael – anticipate that you will see the footsteps of Mashiach.

*Eicha Rabba*, Vilna edition, 1:41

Rabbi Baruch Epstein writes as follows:

“If you see benches full of Babylonians set out in Eretz Yisrael” – That is, if you see many of those in exile coming from Babylon to our Land, this is a sign that the Holy One, Blessed be He, has calculated that the end is near...

Perhaps in this commentary is a hint of what is written, “Whoever goes from Babylon to Eretz Yisrael is violating a positive commandment, as is written, *I order you take an oath, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the deer of the fields, not to awaken the love* (that is, to ascend to Eretz Yisrael) *until it is desired*. (Shir Hashirim 2:7).” (Ketuvot 111b). That is, we must wait until the will of God is ready. We can conclude that the appearance of a general desire to ascend to the Land is a sign that the time has come. Therefore, “If you see benches full of Babylonians set out in Eretz Yisrael” – that is, many people are coming to the Land – then “anticipate that you will see the footsteps of Mashiach.” It is a sign that Mashiach is already standing at the gates of Jerusalem.

*Torah Temimah*, Eichah 1:13 – note 146

The same idea appeared before the *Torah Temimah* was written, in a responsa by Rabbi Yehoshua from Kutna more than 120 years ago:

The ingathering is the beginning of the redemption, especially now that we have seen the great yearning that has appeared both among those who are unimportant, average people, and also those who have pure hearts – it is almost certain that the spark of redemption has begun to shine.

*Yeshu'ot Malko, Yoreh Dei'ah, 66*

The fact that a general awakening has appeared in Yisrael that includes a diverse cross-section of the nation – people far from Torah and the mitzvot, the “mediocre,” and people who “have pure hearts” – is a sign from heaven that the spirit of redemption has made an appearance. It is a sign from above that the time has come.

On one hand, the redemption depends on our yearning. And, on the other hand, when we begin to awaken and start to yearn – this is a sign that the time of redemption has arrived.

## **The Spark of Redemption**

Let us review some facts connected with the liberation of Jerusalem that illustrate the point made by the author of *Yeshu'ot Malko*.

We will start with a speech on the eve of Jerusalem Liberation Day in our yeshiva (Or Etzion) by General Uzi Narkiss, the commander of the Central Region during the Six Day War. He explained to us that not only was there no plan to capture Jerusalem, but just the opposite – We did everything we could to prevent this from happening!

Before the war nobody made any plans or thought at all about liberating Jerusalem. However, throughout that year some phenomena took place that hinted at expressions of yearning for the city. The different events can be linked to each other, such that looking back it is hard to explain what happened unless we assume that the spark of a Divine spirit was kindled, joining these events together. In hindsight, we can say that we were inspired by flashes of the people of Yisrael yearning to return to Jerusalem.

1. As the month of Tevet approached that year (December-January), we felt a special sense of awakening in the yeshiva. There was a strong desire to visit Jerusalem, to be close to the Old City. There was no rational explanation for this desire.

The entire yeshiva traveled to Jerusalem, and we tried to get as close as possible to the walls of the Old City. This was not at all easy at the time, when the city was divided by borders between the Kingdom of Jordan and Israel. We all went onto a high roof to get a view of the wall, and each and every one of us ripped our clothing, to observe the law of mourning by one who “sees the ruins of Jerusalem” (Moed Katan 26a).

After Jerusalem was liberated, one student’s mother spoke about her son. At first, he wanted to ask whether he was permitted to fix the tear in his shirt. But after the city was liberated he no longer asked the question, and he said he would keep the shirt as a

memento that in the very same year he had torn his shirt over the destruction of Jerusalem he had been privileged to see it liberated.

2. In Adar of that year (April), we hosted in our yeshiva a joint gathering of the senior classes in the Bnei Akiva Yeshivot from all over the country. At the time we still held such gatherings on Shabbat, in an effort to encourage the students to continue studying in yeshivot after their graduation. As Shabbat drew to a close, we all gathered in the Beit Midrash of Yeshivat Or Etzion. One of the participants made the following declaration: “We must view ourselves as soldiers lying at the foot of the Temple Mount, in order to capture it.” The one who said this was Rabbi Chanan Porat (then a student, who later became one of the leaders of the settlement movement in Yehuda and the Shomron). Two months after he said this, Porat was a soldier fighting in the battles that ended with the liberation of Jerusalem.

3. On Chol Hamoed of Pesach, a national convention of Bnei Akiva was held in Jerusalem. One of the members (Dr. Amnon Shapira, who today is a prominent educator) proposed that the next convention should take place in the Old City of Jerusalem.

And this is the decision as it was finally worded: “The convention directs the national management to enhance the awareness of the Old City of Jerusalem among the members of the movement.”

4. Yeshivat Or Etzion is named after “Gush Etzion” (the Etzion Bloc), an area that tragically fell into enemy hands in the War of Independence and remained under their control until the Six Day War. In the yeshiva, we had a custom of commemorating the fall of Gush Etzion twice a year: During the month of Shevat, we had a ceremony remembering the “Convoy of the Thirty-Five” that fell on the way to Gush Etzion, and on the eve of Yom Haatzma’ut we had a ceremony for the entire Gush.

That year, we decided to hold a torch-bearing hike starting at the Bar Giora police station, a place from where it was possible to get a view of Gush Etzion, and go from there to our yeshiva. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, the day that Gush Etzion fell, the entire yeshiva went to the police station and walked with torches in their hands. At the assembly at the end of the hike, when we gathered at the start of Yom Haatzma’ut, we declared, “We will yet return to Gush Etzion!”

5. The evening of Yom Haatzma’ut that year, my mentor Rav Tzvi Yehuda spoke in a holiday gathering in Yeshivat Merkaz Harav, in Jerusalem. In the middle of his speech, he cried out: "Where is our Chevron – are we forgetting it? And where are our Shechem and our Jericho? Will we forget them? And what about the land across the Jordan River – it belongs to us, every clod of earth, every four Amot, every region of the land that is part of the Land of God – Are we capable of giving up even one millimeter of any of these places?"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This has been recorded in the book, *Linativot Yisrael*, volume 2, in the Chapter, “The Nineteenth Psalm for the State of Israel.”



6. The Six Day War began on Monday morning, and Jerusalem was liberated on Wednesday. On Monday and Tuesday nobody thought about capturing the city, and as noted above in the words of Uzi Narkiss, we did everything we could to prevent this from happening.<sup>4</sup> Monday night in our yeshiva we decided to organize an all-night vigil and study issues related to Jerusalem. The purpose was to promote the liberation of the city, even though at that time nobody was seriously thinking of doing that.

It is true that most of these examples involve only a small group of people, but they indicate the atmosphere of our nation at the time. We can also add that as Yom Haatzma'ut approached the song "Jerusalem of Gold" was composed. This song is filled with yearning and a strong desire to live within the city.

Of course, all of the events listed above can be explained as completely independent from each other. But when they are all taken together it becomes absolutely clear that the awakening of the people at that time was very significant. When all the events are viewed from a historical perspective, we can clearly see that our actions were an expression of "awakening from heaven" – the generation of the spark of redemption. As the author of *Yeshu'ot Malko* wrote, when Yisrael as a whole shows signs of waking up this should not be considered a coincidence but "it is almost certain that the spark of redemption has begun to shine."

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<sup>4</sup> As is well known, the Prime Minister at the time, Levi Eshkol, sent a message to King Hussein of Jordan (who was in control of Jerusalem): We will not attack you if you do not move against us; we have no quarrel with you.



*Rabbi Chaim Drukman was born in 1932 and made Aliyah to Israel in 1944 from Poland, after being rescued from the holocaust. He is a former Member of Israeli Parliament. He is the Rosh Yeshiva of the Or Etzion Yeshiva and head of the Bnei Akiva Yeshivot in Israel. In 2012 he was awarded the Israel Prize, in the category of Lifetime Achievement.*

*His book, **Kim'a Kim'a (Step by step)**, provides deep insights into modern Israeli Orthodox thought and philosophy with respect to the Jewish people's eventual delivery from exile to redemption and the important part the State of Israel has played in this process.*

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