

# Kim'a Kim'a Step by Step

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

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Section 1

**The Path to  
Redemption**

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## Chapter 1

# Redemption - Step by Step

### The Process of Redemption

As an introduction to the topic of Yisrael's Redemption, we will start with two wise men who saw "the light of dawn":

Rabbi Chiya Rabba and Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta were walking in the Arbel Valley early in the morning, and they saw the light before the break of dawn (*ayelet hashachar*). Rabbi Chiya Rabba said to Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta: Rabbi – This is how the Redemption of Yisrael will be: At first it will be little by little (*kim'a kim'a*), but then it will become stronger... At first, *Mordechai sat at the king's gate* (Esther 2:21), and then, *Haman took the garments and the horse* (ibid. 5:11). Then, *Mordechai returned to the king's gate* (ibid. 6:12), and *Mordechai left from before the king in royal garments* (ibid. 8:15). Finally, *The Jews experienced light and joy* (ibid. 8:16).

Talmud Yerushalmi, Berachot 1:1

The coming of the Redemption will be similar to the arrival of dawn in several ways:

1. Just as the dawn is a slow process, Redemption is also a process and not a sudden event.
2. When dawn begins to appear, not all discern when it starts; only later does it become obvious to everyone. The same is true of Redemption. Not everyone recognizes the early stages. It is only as it develops that it becomes obvious that the process has begun.
3. Before dawn, the night is at its darkest. This is true of both nature and the process of Redemption.

Our Sages repeatedly emphasize this point:

There is no greater darkness than the hour closest to dawn.

Midrash Shocher Tov 68

*Your offspring will be as the dust of the earth* (Bereishit 28:14). When your children reach the stage of *the dust of the earth*, at that moment, *you will burst out to the west and to the east* (ibid.).

Shemot Rabba 25:8

*God will respond to you in a day of need* (Tehillim 20:2). This can be compared to a father and son who were on a journey. The son became weary, and he said to his father: How far do we have to go? He replied: Remember this sign: When you see a cemetery, you are almost there. And that is what the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Yisrael: When you see many troubles piling up, that is the moment you will be redeemed.

Midrash Shocher Tov 20

The Kli Yakar offers an explanation for the phenomenon that both in nature and in the Redemption, the deepest darkness occurs just before the first light. He notes that Pharaoh increased the oppression of the Jewish People after Moshe had already been sent to redeem them. Why did the suffering, symbolized by darkness, become worse?

This is a well-known fact. Every day, as dawn approaches, it becomes darker than it is in the middle of the night. Then dawn breaks and light appears. Similarly, many sick people become stronger when they are closest to death; they sit up in bed and ask for food – and then they are overwhelmed by death. In

the winter too, as dawn approaches, it becomes coldest, until eventually the cold is overcome by the sun.

This is a natural phenomenon, since every natural element senses when something is trying to overcome it. At that point, it gathers its strength to overpower the other side, and it tries with all its might to continue as before. However, in the end, the opposing forces prevail...

Kli Yakar, Shemot 6:1

A natural element in danger of being overcome by an 'opponent' gathers all of its strength and asserts itself. This is true of the dawn and of Redemption alike. Before the light shines – just before Redemption – the darkness and the exile gather all their strength against their enemies, and darkness becomes stronger.

## “He Grows the Power of Salvation”

In the weekday *Amidah*, the blessing about Redemption is, “Quickly grow a sprout of your servant David... You are blessed, God, who grows the power of salvation.” This blessing uses the root “*tzemichah*” – growth – three times, emphasizing that the development of our Redemption can be compared to a growing plant.

The concept of “growth” or “sprouting” as related to Redemption appears in many places in *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*:

*Behold, days are coming, God says, and I will establish a righteous sprout (“tzemach tzadik”) for David, and he will reign as a king and he will be wise, and he will perform justice and righteousness in the Land.*

Yirmiyahu 23:5

Radak explains:

*A righteous sprout is the Mashiach, and he is called a sprout because his entry into the world will be like a plant growing in a field...*

Elsewhere, Yirmiyahu writes:

*In those days and at that time, I will grow from David a sprout of righteousness, and he will perform justice and righteousness in the Land.*

Ibid. 33:15

Once again Radak explains: “A *sprout of righteousness* – this is the King Mashiach.”

The same appears in the prophecy of Zechariah (3:8): *For I will bring my servant as a sprout*. Here again, Radak notes: “This is the King Mashiach.”

And in another prophecy:

*And you shall say to him: This is what the God of Hosts says: Behold a man whose name is a sprout, and one will grow instead of him and build the Temple of God.*

Ibid. 6:12

And:

*There I will grow strength for David; I set a lamp for My anointed one.*

Tehillim 132:17

In composing the text of the prayers, the Anshei Knesset HaGedolah emphasized the concept of growth in the blessing about Messianic Redemption based on these verses.

This growth includes the three main elements that we saw in the dawn, as described by Rabbi Chiya:

1. Plant growth is a slow process.
2. At first, one who looks at the ground does not see anything. Only after the plant germinates does it become clear that the growth began before the external signs appeared.
3. New growth takes place only after the original seed has become rotten.

By comparing Messianic Redemption to plant growth, the Anshei Knesset HaGedolah taught us an important lesson. We can use these three elements to analyze our own Redemption.



## Redemption – A Natural Process

The fact that Redemption is a process implies that it takes place in a natural manner. A natural process takes place in stages; it develops slowly, one step after another. A miracle, in contrast, is not a process, but rather a singular point of change that happens quickly.

Rabbi Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal<sup>1</sup> wrote:

It is clear from all of this [the comparison between Redemption and growth] that our future salvation will sprout forth naturally – that is, through miracles disguised in nature. Therefore, time will be needed for this natural process to develop...

Eim HaBanim Semeichah p. 139

Redemption is a process; it takes time and progresses slowly.

Indeed, Rabbi Chiya cites the best example of this – the salvation on Purim, which was clearly a miracle cloaked in natural processes. All the events recorded in the Megillah took place naturally. Rabbi Chiya gives two examples of the “step by step” principle – one from nature (the dawn) and one from history (Purim).

## Darkness and Light Intertwined

So far, we have seen that Redemption is a process that occurs through natural means, step by step. If we would see only constant progress, no matter how slow, we would have no doubt that we were in the midst of the Redemption process. However, real life doesn't work that way. In real life, there are ups and downs, making things difficult. Again and again we ask ourselves: Are we really in the midst of a Redemption process, or are these merely false hopes?

Rabbi Chiya teaches us that the Redemption can be compared to dawn. When the time comes, everything around us is still in the dark. Only once the brightest light appears will the darkness disappear completely. Until then, darkness will still rule the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Learn more about Rabbi Teichtal in the summary of the lives of famous rabbis in the Appendix.

This principle appears earlier, in the words of the prophets:

*And it will come to pass on that day... There will be one day, known to God, neither day nor night. And it will happen that in the evening there will be light.*

Zechariah 14:6-7

What is a day that is *neither day nor night*? And what about the phrase, *in the evening there will be light*? In nature, the evening brings darkness, not light. Rashi explains:

*Neither day nor night* – Not the bright light of the World to Come... and not a time of suffering due to the bondage of the exile...

According to Rashi, Zechariah is not referring to an astronomical day of 24 hours, but rather to a period of time. It is an era that will no longer be “night” – we will no longer be in exile – but it will not yet be “day” – we will not have achieved full Redemption. When will this be? Rashi writes, “It will be before the arrival of the Mashiach.” With this interpretation, the rest of the verse becomes clear: *And it will happen in the evening* – when that period will come to an end, when the intermediate stage will be over, then – *there will be light* – the full light of Redemption will appear. No darkness will remain.

Radak presents a similar explanation:

*Neither day nor night* – It will neither be completely day nor completely night. That is, it will not be a time of absolute tragedy or a time of total comfort.

In this intermediate stage before full Redemption, darkness and light will merge. Some light will be visible, but there will also be some darkness – symbolic of all failures, faults and weaknesses. This is a direct consequence of the fact that Redemption is a natural process. With human activities influencing the ongoing Redemption process, there will be progress and regression along the way.

## “Step by Step”

The concept of Redemption developing “step by step” appears often in the Acharonim. Here are a few examples:

### The Vilna Gaon:

It is important to know beforehand that the flowering of the Redemption will come little by little. That is the way of the Redemption; it comes step by step, like the dawn. *When I sit in darkness, God will provide me with light* (Michah 7:8). *The light increases gradually until the day has come* (Mishlei 4:18). Therefore, it is important to begin every activity of the flowering of the Redemption, even if it is merely a minor action.

Kol HaTor 1:16

### Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Kalischer:<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the anticipated Redemption of Yisrael, let nobody think that God will suddenly descend from heaven to earth and tell His nation to leave wherever they are, or that He will instantly send His Mashiach from the heavens to blow the great shofar and gather the distant people into Jerusalem, and that He will construct a fiery wall and that a Temple of flames will descend, as has been promised by His servants the prophets.

This is not what a wise person reads in the prophecies. Certainly, all the prophets' missions will be fulfilled in the End of Days, and not a single element will be left by the wayside, heaven forbid.

However, we will not flee and we will not hurry matters into a single day. Rather, the Redemption of Yisrael will come about slowly. Little by little, the strength of salvation will begin to grow, until "Yisrael will triumph" and "in the end they will prosper greatly," with all the missions and promises of the holy prophets fulfilled. With God's help, I will clarify this from the Ketuvim and from the words of our Sages.

Derishat Tzion, p. 37

This is similar to what Malbim<sup>3</sup> wrote to Rabbi Kalischer, who had asked him about the return to Eretz Yisrael during their lifetimes:

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2 Learn more about Rabbi Kalischer in the summary of the lives of famous rabbis in the Appendix.

3 Learn more about the Malbim in the summary of the lives of famous rabbis in the Appendix.

In principle, your words are true and correct. And I have several proofs from simple texts, as I have explained them: The Redemption will come little by little. *Its arrival will come as the dawn* (Hoshea 6:3). *The light increases gradually until the day has come* (Mishlei 4:18) ... Eretz Yisrael will be settled before Mashiach comes.

Shivat Tzion, part 2

Malbim testifies that he has clear written proofs the Redemption will come slowly. Here is one source in his commentary:

*And you, the tower of the flock, the "Ophel," the daughter of Zion, they will come to you, and the first kingdom will come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.*

Michah 4:8

Malbim explains:

First, *Zion, they will come to you*. The exiles will begin to gather. The exiles of Yehudah and Binyamin, *the daughter of Jerusalem*, who went into exile when the Second Temple was destroyed, will gather to you.

Then, *the first kingdom will come*. A minor government will come that will consist of some aspects of authority and leadership, as Yisrael had in the earliest times, before a king ruled them, when they were ruled by the Judges.

And then, *there will be a kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem*. They will be ruled by permanent leaders from the House of David, and this will be followed by the King Mashiach in an eternal kingdom.

The kingdom of Yisrael will develop by stages. First will be the Ingathering of the Exiles and the establishment of a minor government. Only later will a great and permanent kingdom from the House of David be established, with Mashiach at its head.

## Why Must it be Step by Step?

We have seen that Redemption develops slowly. But why? Why is it necessary to proceed "step by step"?

Consider the following prophecy:

*Wilderness and parched land will be filled with joy, and the desert will be happy, and it will grow like a lily. Let it blossom with abundance and be joyous; it has been given the glory of Lebanon and the majesty of the Carmel and the Sharon. They will see the Glory of God, the majesty of our God.*

Yishayahu 35:1-2

The Sages explain:

Why is this written in this way? It teaches you that when the Holy One, Blessed be He, reveals His Shechinah to Yisrael, He does not reveal all of His good at once, because they would be overwhelmed by too much good. If He were to show them all the good at once, they would all die.

Midrash Tanchuma (Buber), Devarim 1:2

The Redemption is a renewal of the revelation of the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, to Yisrael, and this is a tremendous gift. But if it were to come in a single burst, we would not be able to absorb it or withstand it. We cannot absorb the full light of the Redemption with our existing tools.<sup>4</sup> If such a bright light were to shine all at once, we would be overwhelmed and go blind.

The Sages give another example:

Take a lesson from Yosef. When he made himself known to his brothers after a separation of several years, he said to them, *I am your brother Yosef!* And what happened? *His brothers could not respond to him because they were shocked by him* (Bereishit 45:3). When the Holy One, Blessed be He, is revealed, how much stronger will our reaction be!

Tanchuma, *ibid.*

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4 That is how Rabbi David Avudraham explains the text of the blessing before the Shema: "He who lights up the earth and its inhabitants with mercy." Avudraham writes: "He brings the light to us mercifully, little by little, and not all at once. If one rises from his bed and sees a great light, he cannot open his eyes right away. First he must stand for a short time as one who is blind and cannot look at the light" (Avudraham, *the Blessings of the Shema*).

The example of Yosef and his brothers teaches us that the essence of the Redemption is a renewed encounter with the Holy One, Blessed be He, after a separation of 2,000 years of exile. As with Yosef and his brothers, such a renewed acquaintance cannot take place all of a sudden. Time is needed for preparation. The Midrash adds:

What, then, does the Holy One, Blessed be He, do for them? He is revealed to them step by step. First he brings joy to the mountains, as is written, *Wilderness and parched land will be filled with joy. And then, the desert and the dry land will be happy. After this, it will blossom with abundance, and then, they will be given the glory of Lebanon. Finally, they will see the Glory of God, the majesty of our God* (Yishayahu 35:1-2).

Ibid.

Matters proceed gradually. The Redemption process begins externally, and slowly, step by step, it becomes internal. The process begins with the outer shell, when the Holy One, Blessed be He, brings joy to the mountains, as is written, *And you, the mountains of Yisrael, let your branches grow and load up with fruit for My nation Yisrael, for they are coming soon* (Yechezkel 36:8). In the next step, *they will be given the glory of Lebanon* (Yishayahu 35:2). We will obtain national honor; our sovereignty will return to us. And in the end, *they will see the Glory of God, the majesty of our God* (ibid.). The final step will be an internal revelation, as the prophet promises: *And he will say on that day: Here, this is our God for whom we hoped, and He will help us. This is God, for whom we hoped, let us be joyous and happy with His salvation* (ibid. 25:9).

It is no coincidence that the Redemption takes place naturally. It is the essence of the event. The revelation must take shape gradually, for otherwise we would be overwhelmed by the sudden appearance of such a powerful light.

This same concept appears in the *Zohar*, explaining the verse, *Who is it that peers out as before dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, as terrible as an army with banners?* (Shir HaShirim 6:10). Rabbi Yehudah taught:

*Who is it that peers out* – This is a reference to Yisrael. When the Holy One, Blessed be He, lifts them and takes them out of exile, He begins with a sliver of light that is narrow and very small. He then makes an opening that is slightly bigger, until the

Holy One, Blessed be He, opens the heavenly gates for them, reaching the four corners of the world...

This can be compared to a man who lives in the dark. To give him some light, the first thing to do is to turn on a small light, the size of the eye of a needle, and then one a little stronger. He is gradually shown a stronger and stronger light, until he can see its full power...

Everyone asks about them [Yisrael]: *Who is it that peers out as before dawn?* This is the early morning, the strongest darkness before the morning light, the feeblest light of all. After that, *beautiful as the moon*. The light of the moon is stronger. Then, *bright as the sun*, giving off very strong light, more than the moon. Finally, *as terrible as an army with banners*. This means that the proper, full light shines bright.

Just look – after the dark comes and the light is hidden, when it is time for morning, the light arrives little by little, until it reaches its fullest power. The same will be true when the Holy One, Blessed be He, awakens to light up Knesset Yisrael...

Zohar, Bereishit 170a

The Rambam's father, Rabbeinu Maimon, sent a letter to console an acquaintance and raise his spirits in the wake of particularly tragic events in their times and because of the great length of the exile. He also discusses the “step by step” principle of Redemption:

After the exile has completed its proper length of time, and the people will be swept along, and some will be destroyed as if in their sleep, Redemption will come, as was described by Moshe: *Their flow will be like sleep; it will pass in the morning like the harvest* (Tehillim 90:5). This is referring to the light of Redemption that will come after the dark of the exile. And indeed, the exile can be compared to darkness, while morning is the time of Redemption, as it comes little by little. And the soul that bears so much pain can take comfort in the dark of the night.

It is like a man floundering in the desert as if he is blind, after darkness has fallen, shuffling around worried about every catastrophe that may befall him. As he moves and night comes, he is perhaps afraid he might fall into a valley or some water, and he cannot be sure where he might fall. And if he is still safe, he fears wild animals that roar around him or bandits that lie

in wait along the path. He is very worried, and the long night seems very long indeed.

This continues until dawn breaks and light comes. Then he will regain his confidence little by little, until the full light arrives and the sun rises. The whole world will be lit up, his anxiety will dissipate, and his eyes will clear. And he will be able to see how and where to go...

Rabbeinu Maimon, Letter of Consolation

## His King is a Tower of Salvation

King David's epic victory poem appears twice in the Tanach – in Shmuel II (chapter 22) and in Tehillim (chapter 18). The last verse is different in the two versions. In Shmuel the word appears as “*migdol*”: *His King is a **tower** of salvation, and He is kind to His Mashiach – to David and his offspring for all eternity.* However, in Tehillim it is written as “*magdil*”: *He will **enhance** the salvation of His King...*

My mentor, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook,<sup>5</sup> explained that the two versions are very different:

*Magdil/migdol* – The same verse appears at the level of holiness of the Nevi'im in the book of Shmuel and at the level of holiness of the Ketuvim in Tehillim. The different language in the two sources depends on differences in holiness. When the level of holiness is high, the verse is recited at the higher level, as it appears in the Nevi'im. In contrast to its appearance as a verb in the Ketuvim, meaning that He enhances the salvation, in the Nevi'im it appears as a noun – that God Himself is a tower of salvation. This is similar to the blessing that is recited during the Ten Days of Repentance: “The King who is Justice.”

Olat Re'iyah, p. 421, note 95

The entire Tanach is holy, but there are different levels of sanctity within it. We should treat the Torah and the Nevi'im differently, and we also

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5 Learn more about Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook in the summary of the lives of famous rabbis in the Appendix.



make a distinction between the Nevi'im and the Ketuvim.<sup>6</sup> In Tehillim, it is written that the Holy One, Blessed be He, “enhances” the salvation of His king, providing active support. However, in the book of Shmuel, which is at the higher level of the Nevi'im, the emphasis is different: *He is a tower of salvation*. The Holy One, Blessed be He, is Himself a tower. This is a significant difference between the two verses.

A similar phenomenon appears in the weekday *Amidah*. All year long, we conclude the blessing about justice with the words, “The King who loves righteousness and justice,” but during the Ten Days of Repentance, we say, “The King, the Justice.” This emphasizes that God not only loves justice, but that the trait of justice itself is part of His character.

This explains how we choose which verse to read in *Birkat HaMazon*. The verse read on Shabbat and the holidays – *migdol* – comes from the source at a higher level of holiness, in which the point is emphasized to a greater extent. The verse read on weekdays – *magdil* – comes from the less holy source and is not as powerful a description.

The Sages discussed the different meanings of the two versions of the poem:

One verse states *migdol* and the other states *magdil*. Rav Yudin says this is related to the fact that the Redemption of this nation does not come at once, but rather step by step. That is the meaning of *magdil* – that the Redemption grows and comes slowly before Yisrael. This is because they are now suffering from great trouble, and if the Redemption were to come all at once, they would not be able to tolerate such a great salvation... And what does *migdol* mean? The King Mashiach will become a tower of strength for them.

Midrash Shocheh Tov, end of Tehillim 18

The beginning of the Redemption is a lengthy process in which the Holy One, Blessed be He, slowly develops the salvation. It is only after we achieve full Redemption that “The King Mashiach will become a tower of strength for them.”

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<sup>6</sup> The differences in holiness levels have halachic ramifications, such as the rules for binding different sections of the Tanach together, or which books can be placed on top of others (see *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Dei'ah 282:19*).

*Section 1 - The Path to Redemption*

The process of Redemption, which takes place in a natural fashion, is reflected in a verse in Tehillim, at the relatively low level of holiness of the Ketuvim, while the end of the process – complete Redemption – is portrayed in the book of Shmuel, at the higher level of holiness of the Nevi'im. In *Birkat HaMazon*, on weekdays we use the term that describes the coming of the Redemption in a natural manner, while on Shabbat and holidays we refer to the final and complete Redemption.