



Are Charedim and Zionists Both Right?

Will the final Beit Hamikdash be fashioned by Hashem in heaven or assembled on earth by humans? The gemara in Bava Kamah (60b) records Hashem's promise to personally rebuild the Mikdash which He himself wrecked. Based on this divine promise, Tosafot in Shavuot (15b) claim that the final Mikdash will be supernaturally constructed in Heaven.

A different gemara in Ketubot (5a) extols the handiwork of the righteous as surpassing the works of heaven. Hashem's creations are formed with only "one hand" whereas the final Mikdash, built by the righteous, is described as being built by "two hands". Based upon this gemara, many, including Rashi conclude that the third Mikdash will be built by humans.

Some suggest that these two versions represent two different historical options. If we are deserving, we benefit from a superior celestial Mikdash, but if we fall short of redemptive expectations we will have to suffice with a human product. Several gemarot and midrashim condition the

quality and pace of our geulah upon our conduct. Perhaps these two different models of the final Mikdash as well, represent the ideal option of a heavenly Mikdash, alongside a backup plan of a human edifice if we are less deserving.

It certainly doesn't sound that way from the Rambam's description. He lists one of the tasks of Mashiach as rebuilding the third Mikdash, never implying that a divine construction would be a preferable option. Apparently, the Rambam viewed a human-crafted Mikdash as the ideal option, whereas Tosfot argued that a divine construction would be ideal.

Two Models of Geulah

This debate about the construction of the final Mikdash represents a more general debate about the ideal method of redemption. Some believe that redemption should be purely divine, without human participation. Humans cannot perfect this broken world, and we should wait patiently and piously for Hashem to re landscape our reality in a way that only He can. Redemption driven solely by Hashem isn't just more outstanding, it is more transparently divine. Devoid of any human participation, a purely divine redemption displays the hand of Hashem for all. Hashem isn't veiled or concealed by nature, history or humans. His presence becomes unmistakable to all.

Others believe that Hashem desires human partners to jointly remodel history.

The redemption of history and of human failure must stream through human experience and human events. Even though the hand of Hashem is less obvious, it will be more integrated with history.

This is the great modern debate which our people currently face. Is geulah meant to be a partnership, in which a nation chosen by Hashem reawakens after 2000 years of hibernation to assume their ancestral heritage, rebuild their ruptured relationship with Hashem and jointly rebuild history? Or, is geulah meant to be an unaccompanied divine solo, in which Hashem appears on an empty stage, reconstituting a perfect world through a divine process untainted by imperfect human efforts?

Are Both Models Correct ?

Can *both* positions be correct? Can Hashem craft a multilayered process of redemption, which contains *both* human elements *and* divine authorship? Can Hashem craft a redemptive experience which is so complex and possesses so many different tiers, that different people or groups of people experience redemption completely differently? Can there be *more than one* correct redemptive narrative. Can Hashem create a *super narrative* which is so broad that different people *legitimately* read it and experience it differently and even inversely from one another?

Multiple Truths to Torah

We certainly embrace the concept of multiple truths regarding Hashem's Torah. We do not believe that Hashem delivered one exclusive truth at Sinai. Though certain Torah facts are inalienable, obviously, others are more open to interpretation and debate. Disagreements in gemara



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are not caused by the deterioration of our masorah or by our forgetting the *one* position Hashem instructed at Sinai. Instead, Hashem delivered multiple truths which to us seem contradictory, but to Him are perfectly reconcilable.

At Har Sinai Hashem presented Moshe with a particular halachic complexity, instructing him that the item in question was *both forbidden and permissible*. As binary humans we can't imagine it as both, but Hashem isn't binary and can encompass opposing realities. For us it is either day or night, but to Hashem it is both day *and* night – יוצר אור ובורא חושך עושה שלום ובורא את הכל

Hashem taught Moshe each of these opposing truths and throughout the generations different people grasped one, but not both, of these truths. However, each position reflects part of the larger truth of Hashem's will.

Regarding halachic behavior we are forced to implement one and only one truth, since human experience is binary. We are either allowed to eat the item or forbidden from eating it. However, regarding the theoretical pursuit of Hashem's infinite knowledge, we embrace each of these opposing opinions as divine truth. As Neils Bohr, the Danish physicist claimed “The opposite of a correct statement is a

false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth.” Hashem doesn't deal in binary true and false, but in multiple profound truths. Torah is certainly a divine text into which multiple and even opposing truths are woven. No human being can see the totality, and everyone just perceives their small fragment of the sweeping truth of Hashem.

If Hashem is capable of developing a multi-tiered logical system, isn't He also capable of authoring a multi-tiered historical process of redemption? Can Hashem create a Mikdash which is built through *both* divine assembly *as well* as through human initiative, enabling different people to interpret it differently. Some ignore the human element, viewing it as irrelevant or even degrading, whereas others prefer to discover the hidden hand of Hashem streaming through human history and human politics. Just as in the Talmudic universe we view each opposing position as co-legitimate, can we apply the same doctrine to the differing narratives surrounding our final redemption?

Two Narratives at the Sea

We already have a precedent for multiple narratives of redemption. At *keriyat Yam Suf* two different narratives unfolded. The



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midrash documents a dispute between the tribes of Binyamin and Yehuda about who would be the first to enter the sea. The debate became so fiery that people of Yehuda stoned members of Binyamin. The dispute wasn't an egotistical competition for "first place" at the sea, but rather, an ideological debate about how this ocean miracle would unfold.

The Netziv asserts that the tribes of Binyamin and Yehuda carried different expectations for this redemptive miracle. Yehuda preferred to wait for a more natural splitting of the sea. A strong wind had been gusting all night and could eventually stiffen the water or even split it. Obviously, Hashem was driving this windstorm, but it appeared as a natural event. Yehuda preferred a partially concealed miracle or a **נס נסתר** which was tethered to Nature rather than apart from her. They preferred to wait before entering the sea.

The members of Binyamin had a totally different idea about *keriyat Yam Suf*, preferring an overpowering supernatural event unaided by any natural force or any human facade. They preferred to be redeemed solely by the hand of Hashem, unaided by Nature. They voted to jump into the roaring sea and rely upon Hashem's dramatic miracle. The Midrash concludes

that Hashem recognized the legitimacy of each tribes' position and rewarded each for their valor and redemptive faith.

Is Our Geulah a Double Narrative?

Are we experiencing a similar phenomenon as we near our final redemption? Has Hashem created a complex redemptive process, divinely authored, but also incorporating human investment? Does he allow different people or different groups of people to interpret this process differently? Does He desire this dual narrative?

Some legitimately interpret this redemptive narrative as exclusive of any human initiative, and instead wait for a more splendid divine process untainted by human efforts. Alternatively, some view redemption evolutionarily, as a process driven by humans, which streams through human experiences and human politics.

Isn't redemption just another "sugya" which yields multiple truths. Hashem created a tapestry of geulah which can be viewed from different angles. Maybe it is time to appreciate that *our* truth isn't the *only* truth. It can't be when we face the divine truth and the enormity of the divine mystery.

Nothing is more mysterious than redemption. ■



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