

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
Zelda *bas* Moshe *a”h*
a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

The Third Beis Hamikdash PARSHAS VA’ESCHANAN 5775

(A significant portion of this article is based on the *sefer Otzros Achriss Hayamim*, vol. I, ch. 9.)

When a person departs from This World, Chazal tell us, he faces a Heavenly Tribunal that queries him about his lifetime activities. One of the six questions they ask is “*Tzipisa l’yeshuah* – Did you anxiously await the final redemption?” (*Shabbos 31a*).

There is a beautiful prevalent custom in Klal Yisrael that appears to serve, at least in part, as a fulfillment of this directive. It manifests itself in almost every major address, speech, or even Torah thought shared at a private celebration such as a *sheva berachos*. The practice entails adding a note of hope and comfort at the conclusion of the speech, invoking a prayer that we should merit to behold the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash (Holy Temple), “*Bimheirah v’yameinu* (speedily in our times), *amein*.”

This prayer mirrors the one we recite at the conclusion of Shemoneh Esreih, and appears, as well, in the Mishnah in Avos (5:20):

הי רצון מלפניך ד' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו, שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בזמנינו, ותן חלקנו בתורתך.

“May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, and the G-d of our fathers, that the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt speedily in our days; and grant our portion in Your Torah.”

From Below or Above?

The issue that arises is that these words, with which many are quite fluent, seem to contradict another familiar notion. Whether from popular songs or from the teachings from which the idea originated, we are used to picturing the re-emergence of the Beis Hamikdash in terms of a fully-constructed, ethereal edifice descending from on High.

There is real basis for this idea. Rashi writes the following in Sukkah (41a, s.v. “*Iy nami*”):
מקדש העתיד שאנו מצפין בו ומשוכלל הוא נגלה ונבא משמים, שנגמר מקדש ד' בוננו ונדוד – “The future Beis Hamikdash for which we yearn is already fully constructed and ready; it will (simply) be revealed (to us) and will descend from the Heavens. As it states (*Shemos 15:17*): ‘The Sanctuary, Hashem, established by Your hands.’” There is a work of Chazal known as Medrash Vayosha which, in discussing the events of the *Acharis Hayamim* (Final Days), states the same: “Hashem will bring down the Sanctuary from the Heavens, in the manner that He had shown to Moshe.”

As stated, however, there seem to be contradictory intimations. The position of Rashi (who is joined by numerous other Rishonim, such as Tosfos and the Ritva) – not to mention the clear statement of the Medrash Vayosha – is that the Third Beis Hamikdash is “pre-constructed,” to be lowered by Hashem at the time of His choosing. But how does this square with the language of the oft-repeated prayer (mentioned also by Chazal themselves, as evidenced by the above citation from Avos) that states “הי רצון מלפניך ... שיבנה בית המקדש -- “May it be Your

will... that the Temple shall be **built**”? If a completed structure was set to descend from on High, the seemingly more appropriate prayer would be שְׁיִגְלָה בַּיִת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ – “that the Temple be **revealed**”! In its current form of שְׁיִבְנֶה, the implication leans more to the position championed by the Rambam: namely, that it will be built by the hands of man. In his Introduction to Seder Zerai’ m, the Rambam explains the purpose of Maseches Middos, which lists the dimensions of the various aspects of the Second Temple: “For when the Temple will be rebuilt speedily in our days, the building plan (as laid out in this *masechta*) must be followed.” (In *Hilchos Melachim* [ch. 11], the Rambam writes that involvement in the construction of the Temple will fall under the purview of Mashiach himself.)

It All Fits Together

The Aruch Laneir in Sukkah (*ibid.*) presents a novel and wondrous resolution. In fact, both are true – the Beis Hamikdash will be built by man and will also descend fully ready from Above. He explains by invoking another concept mentioned in Chazal: Namely, the two co-existing Temples – the Beis Hamikdash Shel Ma’alah (Temple of Above), residing (for now) in the Heavens, which corresponds to the earthly Temple, the Beis Hamikdash Shel Mattah (Temple of Below). What will take place in that glorious era is that the Third Temple will be rebuilt below, at which point Hashem will bring down the Beis Hamikdash Shel Ma’alah to dwell within the earthly Temple. Just as the physical human body contains within it a spiritual *neshamah* (soul), so, too, the ethereal Beis Hamikdash Shel Ma’alah will descend to earth to reside within and serve as the “*neshamah*” of the manmade Beis Hamikdash Shel Mattah.

This may be the meaning behind the *Nacheim* prayer inserted into the *minchah* Shemoneh Esreih of Tishah B’av: כִּי אֵתָהּ ה' בָּאֵשׁ הִצַּתָּהּ, וּבָאֵשׁ אֵתָהּ עֲתִיד לְבְנוֹתָהּ כְּאֹמֵר וְאֵנִי אֶהְיֶה לָּהּ נֶאֱמַר ה' – “For You, Hashem, have ignited a fire against (the Beis Hamikdash), and with a fire You will rebuild it in the future; as is stated (*Zechariah 2:9*): ‘And I will be for it a surrounding wall of fire...’” In a manner reminiscent of the above discussion we may ask: Will the future Beis Hamikdash be constructed from Heavenly fire or earthly material? Based on the Aruch Laneir, it would seem that both could be true; the “outer casing,” which is the Beis Hamikdash Shel Mattah, will be manmade construction, while the inner “*neshamah*” of the Mikdash will be its spiritual essence sent down from on High.

We have taken this opportunity to at least nominally explore this issue, as it seems to be a topic in keeping with the *nechamah* (comforting) theme of Shabbos Nachamu. R’ Shlomo Brevda writes (*Yibaneh Hamikdash*, p. 130) that, in fact, this is the function of the series of seven “comforting” *haftarahs* recited during the post-Tishah B’av weeks. By keeping the prophetic messages of the Final Redemption at the forefront of our focus, we are reminded of the essential (but all too often overlooked) fact that there is a *keitz*, an expiration, to our troubles and our *galus* (exile). While the precise details of the *ge’ulah* (redemption) are yet to be revealed in all of their fullness, we can at least take comfort that its imminent arrival will be wondrous indeed. As the *navi* (prophet) states: כִּי־מִי צִאֲתָד מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֶרְאֶנּוּ נִפְלְאוֹת – “As with the days of your exodus from the land of Egypt, I will show you wonders.” May we merit to behold these wonders – and the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash – *bimheirah v’yameinu, Amein!*