



RABBI AARON

GOLDSCHIEDER

Editor, Torah Tidbits

Building the Land: A Collaborative Effort

Every member of the Jewish people must know that engaging only in the secular aspects of the revival of the nation contributes to only one facet, and his service is not yet a complete undertaking until he also assists and enhances the religious renewal as an all encompassing national construct.

Similarly, it must be known to every member of the people of Israel, one who builds the sacred underpinnings of the nation, as long as he does not assist and bolster the mundane aspects of the nation, such a person[’s efforts] lacks the fullness of character of the sacred service that is required.

The more we recognize this collaboration, then [the result will be that] the traits of the nation will attain their fullness of character - with the joy of heart of all who await the salvation of Israel from Zion, with truth and righteousness. (Eretz Chefetz 6:6)

Rav Kook expressed in this passage the essential need for collaboration between the religious sector together with those Jews engaged predominantly in the

physical building of the Land. Achieving harmony begins with both sides seeing the important role each sector plays in the process of the blossoming of the nation.

Indeed, Rav Kook laid out this vision in an address that he delivered when he first settled in the Land of Israel in 1904. It was

only months after Rav Kook moved to Jaffa, Israel that the eminent founder of modern Zionism, Theodor Herzl, passed away, on July 3, 1904.

His words not only addressed the death of Herzl but contextualized the new Zionist movement in philosophical/theological terms. Rav Kook makes use of a lesser known tradition

that the Messiah of Yosef precedes the Messiah of David. Yosef stands for material redemption, as Yosef was the provider for Israel. Yosef stands for the Jew of Egypt, where he spent the majority of his life in a secular setting. It was there that Israel ran the risk of being ‘swallowed up’ by that world. David, on the other hand, stands for the spiritual, Torah-inspired redemption



- which will not, however, be effective if it is physically weak. The physical well being of Yosef is vital and must be recognized as such. Our long exile enabled us to keep the spiritual values of Judaism with Torah learning and observance; there was no opportunity for our physical development as a nation.

There can be no final redemption, Rav Kook suggests, without the harmony of the body and soul of the Jewish people. Both camps must be willing to value one another.

Rav Kook's remarkable eulogy gives his view of Herzl as having the stature of a precursor to the Messianic redemption. Peppered with many intricate quotations from the Torah, the Talmud and Zohar in support of his views, Rav Kook couches his eulogy of the secular founder of Zionism, Herzl, in the presentations of two Messiahs and the redemption that all Jews can hope for.

Rav Kook in his concluding words of his eulogy for Herzl cites a perplexing passage from the Talmud in which two great sages state that they prefer to be no longer living when the Messiah arrives. Their reasoning is that there will be so much suffering leading to that momentous occasion that they would rather avoid it entirely. Rabbi Yosef disagrees: "Let the Messiah come, and I will be privileged to sit in the shadow of a donkey's excrement." Apparently he means to say that he is willing to undergo all the pain and disgrace associated with his arrival.

Rav Kook suggested another interpretation. The first set of rabbis mentioned in the passage symbolized the type of rabbis who are detested by those who are

rebellious to the Torah. They abhorred the lack of spirituality and their degeneration of Torah values and mitzvot. Nevertheless, Rabbi Yosef was confident that eventually all the negative manifestations would surrender to the light of Torah. In the midst of the darkness, the shadow of *chamor*, materialism and physicality, a little light will appear which dispels much darkness. Rav Kook's concluding words powerfully sum up his entire presentation: "The prerequisite for the generation of Messiah is the ability to utilize all forces, even the most coarse, for the sake of good and the singular sanctity with which Israel was crowned." ■



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