

## Geulas Yisrael: A Fortress and a Sunrise

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We expect redemption to be immediate and rapid but it is often gradual and plodding. Since redemption is a staged process it can include pauses and even temporary reversals. Just because redemption halts, doesn't mean that the overall process has terminated.

There are two very different metaphors which depict the gradual nature of redemption. Twice, Dovid Hamelech compares redemption to a tower or a fortress. He employed the terms migdol (Shmuel II 22:51) and magdil (Tehill 18:51) to describe the "construction" of geulah. Alternatively, our Chazal viewed a sunrise as a metaphor Jewish redemption. Two sages were visiting Lake Kineret viewing an early morning sunrise. They compared the resplendent sunrise to the redemption of the Jewish people: "it starts haltingly but gains force as it progresses- kimm'a kimm'a (little by little)" (Yerushalmi Yoma 3:2).

These two metaphors portray very different features of redemption. Redemption is a Divine event which revamps the world independent of human participation. The sunrise metaphor stresses that the process can repair our fallen and dark world independent of human interaction. However, ideally, Hashem wants human beings to initiate their own redemption. He desires that the perfection of history be a product of human effort complemented by Divine revelation. The fortress metaphor evokes this ideal scenario- that humanity will construct a perfect world – brick by brick. The fortress image depicts the ideal pattern of a redemption authored by human effort. Sometimes though, human effort wont fully succeed. We try to redeem our world as best we can through human convention but when we fall short Hashem intervenes and redeems our broken world for us. The sun also rises upon the human fortress.

A second difference between a sunrise and a fortress concerns the various realms which are impacted by redemption. Redemption isn't a narrowly Jewish experience. Though we spearhead the process, redemption revolutionizes all of human society. Final redemption ushers in a utopian world of common welfare

and universal prosperity. This sweeping influence upon the totality of humanity is evoked by the image of a fortress symbolizing a well-constructed and well-designed city. However, redemption doesn't only benefit humans and doesn't only alter human history. Man lives in symbiosis with Nature and the crimes of men affect the purity and functionality of the natural world. When Jews are redeemed, Nature herself is restored and the world reverts to its original Divine splendor. Two parallel prophecies (one in Yechezkeil and one in Zecharya) speak of a stream of healing water emanating from the Mikdash and fertilizing the barren regions of Israel. The sunrise symbolizes larger planetary consequences of redemption.

A sunrise also underscores the inevitability of redemption. Living "in history" means occupying a world which has a definitive beginning and a clear conclusion. Redemption isn't an "option" for historical resolution, rather it is a preordained terminus, which Man can merit or achieve. Redemption is the destiny of history. We know exactly "how" history will end and exactly "where" it will end. The only items unclear are "when" it will end and "whose shoulders" will carry history toward its conclusion. The sunrise captures the inexorableness of historical redemption: just as the sun is irrepressible, similarly, Jewish redemption is programmed into the fabric of history and will occur unconditionally.

Redemption promises many benefits: universal peace, a healed world, the abolition of poverty and injustice, and expanded intellectual potential- among other achievements. All these worldwide features are centered upon a specific structure located in the city of G-d. All the Messianic promises will emanate from the "fortress" atop the hill- the rebuilt Beit Hamikdash. We are all walking to the fortress.