

Menachem Persoff

Religious Space-Time

"In the beginning (TIME), God created heaven and earth (SPACE)." Notably, in recent parshiyot, the Torah dwelt with the Mishkan, Hashem's sanctuary in Space. Now, the narrative turns to the sanctification of the Shabbat and holidays, sanctuaries in Time.

Both Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Hirsch stress that control over time separates the enslaved person from the free man. However, following Rav Hirsch, by introducing the Mo'adim, Hashem essentially places our time at His disposal, thus allowing us to demonstrate decisively both our belonging to Him and our longing for Him.

In the matter of the Mo'adim - the appointed times - there exists a symbiotic relationship, as it were, between Hashem and His Chosen People. In Rav Hirsch's words, a Mo'ed Hashem only becomes so when proclaimed by the nation as a Mikra Kodesh (a holy convocation) - consequent to their fixing the new moon.

Thus, we are partners with Hashem. We have created, if you wish, religious space-time. And, yes, during the dedicated holiday periods that we call the Foot-festivals, we fuse time with Aliya LaRegel, the treks to the Temple to see and "be seen" and

experience the Sh'china hovering in the Holy City.

Time is clearly manifested in the historical dimension of the festivals. Moreover, from a time perspective, Pesach must fall in the Spring, and Shavuot must occur when the fruits have begun to ripen to bring the Bikurim to the Beit HaMikdash (representing Space).

Notably, the human element of fixing the times of the holidays is so crucial that the Talmud concludes that even if a mistake is made specifying the time of Rosh Chodesh, that decision holds - for, "I do not recognize as My holy days any other than those proclaimed by Israel" (cf. Rosh HaShana 25a).

Rav Hirsch asserts that this partnership with Israel is intended to take our minds away from the notion that celebrating the agricultural elements of the holidays has anything to do with nature. For there are those who readily proclaim that 'Mother Earth' has been kind to us. Indeed, the Aliya LaRegel takes us away from the fields if only to remind us of our reliance on Hashem for our bounty and blessing.

So, as Shavuot approaches, let us internalize the time and space dimensions of those special days of Simcha, Oneg, and Menucha that allow us to be Hashem's guests, if only for short periods of time. **MP**