



Bet Horaah

בית הוראה

Shahre Ezra

עבדני עזרא

Parshat Lech Lecha
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THE TORAH'S OUTLOOK ON ELECTIONS
 WRITTEN BY **RABBI SHAY TAHAN**
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We understand the importance of casting a ballot on Election Day, but not everyone is familiar with the Torah's perspective. Should people voice their opinion on who should be their leader? If Hashem governs everything in the world and His decisions are unchangeable, is there a need for us to vote?

In recent days, I've heard many explain the Torah's view on this matter as similar to any other situation: while Hashem runs the world and has already decided who will be elected as mayor, we are still obligated to make our *hishtadlut* (effort). They claim that our effort has no connection to the outcome of the election. In this article, I will explain why this approach is mistaken and that Hashem does not pre-determine the results; rather, our actions have a direct impact on the outcome of the election.

Is voting a Torah concept?

Let's first examine where a Torah source for voting might be found — or whether voting is truly a modern concept, primarily secular in nature, since some argue that Hashem ultimately decides who will lead the city. The Torah clearly advocates for the concept of 'We the People' choosing our leader, as seen in Berachot (55a): Hashem said to Moshe: "Is Betzalel a suitable choice in your eyes?" Moshe responded: "Master of the universe, if he is suitable to You, then certainly to me." Hashem instructed Moshe to also consult the people, who ultimately confirmed their approval. Even though Hashem had chosen Betzalel, He deferred to the will of the people, demonstrating a clear endorsement of their involvement in leadership selection. This concept, now known as an election, is fundamental to a Torah-based society.

Our sages derive from this that a leader should not be appointed over the people without first consulting them.

The method for determining a public decision is also discussed in the torah, as the concept of voting

is reflected in the pasuk: "לָקַחְתָּ אִתְּךָ רַבִּים" (Shemot 23:2).

For example, in a Beit Din, when the dayanim (judges) are in dispute over a verdict, the final decision is determined according to the majority opinion. This principle shows that following the majority is an accepted method for resolving communal or legal decisions, which parallels the concept of voting in a public context.



Another example can be found in the 300-year delay in appointing Shaul Hamelech as king. Although the Torah mandates appointing a king upon entering the Land of Israel, the Netziv (Haamek Davar on Dvarim 17:14) explains that the

appointment was postponed because the nation was not yet willing. This reinforces the principle that a leader should only be appointed with the people's consent. He writes: "It is not possible to command the appointment of a king as long as it is not with the consent of the people... The Sanhedrin does not issue a decree (for appointing a king) until the people declare that they want a king's leadership. For this reason, during the three hundred years that the Mishkan was at Shiloh, there was no king, because there was no consent of the people, that is, because there was no consent of the people."

The Gemara Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 2:6) further emphasizes this point, stating that Hashem removed Himself from the decision-making process, underscoring the nation's responsibility to appoint their leader.

Does Hashem Get's Involved?

Yet, the Gemara (Bava Batra 91b) says that even the lowest-level authority, such as a water supervisor, is appointed by Heaven: "וְהַמְתַּנְשֵׂא לְכָל לְרֹאשׁ... אֶפִּילוּ רִישׁ גְּרוּגוּתָא מִשְׁמֵי אִי מוֹקְמֵי לִיהּ" This might imply that Hashem alone appoints leaders. The Iyun Yaakov reconciles this by explaining that while Hashem chooses the next leader, the peo-

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ple's approval is still required. Leadership is thus a partnership between Divine will and the people's choice.

Let's delve deeper. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 26a) recounts the story of Shebna, a minister in King Hezkiah's court, who was a prominent figure with considerable influence. Shebna would teach Torah to a crowd of 130,000 followers, surpassing King Hezkiah's audience of 110,000. When King Sancheriv besieged Yerushalayim, Shebna wrote a surrender note, shot it over the wall with an arrow, and it read: "Shebna and his camp have appeased Sancheriv and are ready to surrender; Hezkiah and his camp have not appeased him.

Upon hearing this, Hezkiah feared that the majority stance might sway Hashem's will, causing even those who resisted to fall into the hands of the Assyrians. But the prophet Yeshaya reassured him with the words: "Say not: A conspiracy, concerning all of which this people say: A conspiracy" (Yeshaya 8:12). The prophet's message clarified that a conspiracy of wicked people does not count as a legitimate majority. Thus, despite their numbers, Shebna's supporters were disregarded as the "majority" in the eyes of Hashem.

Commentaries explain that since Hashem often sides with the majority opinion, Hezekiah feared that Hashem might side with the majority here as well. However, the prophet reassured him that Hashem does not side with the wicked. This highlights the importance of voting, as only the majority vote of Klal Yisrael truly holds weight in Hashem's consideration.

The Gedolim's Ruling

Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch (Tshuvot Vehanhagot 2, 140) recounts a rabbinic meeting held before the establishment of the State of Israel, where the rabbis gathered to discuss and cast their opinions. He

describes how Rav Elchanan Wasserman and Rav Aharon Kotler wanted to leave the meeting, but Rav Chaim Ozer urged them to stay. When Rabbi Avraham Kalmenovitz questioned why their presence mattered, given that their vote would likely have little impact on those establishing the state, Rav Chaim Ozer explained that in Hashem's eyes, only the opinions of the righteous truly matter, as we see from the Gemara's account of King Hezekiah.

We learn from this the importance of the Jewish vote in Hashem's eyes, as only those opinions truly matter to Him.

The obligation to vote is also mentioned in a letter from Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, dated October 3, 1984. He writes: "Upon reaching the United States, Jews found a safe haven. The rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights have allowed us the freedom to practice our religion without interference and to live safely in this republic.

A fundamental principle of Judaism is hakaras hatov—recognizing the benefits we have received and expressing our gratitude. Therefore, it is incumbent upon each Jewish citizen to participate in the election process as an expression of appreciation.

A democratic system safeguards the freedoms we enjoy. One of the most fundamental responsibilities of each individual is to register and vote. Therefore, I urge all members of the Jewish community to fulfill their duty by registering as soon as possible and by voting. Through this, we can express our gratitude and contribute to the continued security of our community.

Signed: M. Feinstein"

In conclusion, selecting a leader is a godly act. Hashem determines the potential leader but waits for the people's approval, making our vote a crucial part of this sacred partnership.

WHEN NIMROD WALKS AMONG US: THE MAMDANI PHENOMENON

This week's Torah portion takes us to the first communist regime in history, revealing how such systems gradually, and with great cunning, take shape.

The story of a man called Nimrod is mentioned in our parasha as Amrafel (Rashi 14; 1), who led a world war—a coalition of five kingdoms against four—stemming from a global movement he had founded. To understand how this began, we should look back at last week's parasha and trace its unfolding. This phenomenon repeats itself every few generations, as seen with figures like Hitler, Stalin, and others, who initiated movements that ultimately led to world wars.

The story unfolds some time after the Flood, as the world begins to rebuild itself. As in any society, social classes soon emerged—rich and poor, strong and weak, successful and struggling. Humanity had learned a lesson from the Generation of the Flood: not to be selfish and corrupt, not to steal from one another or act violently. Yet now, a new religion arose—a seemingly noble and positive faith: **the religion of social equality.**

This new "faith" was founded by a man who rose to greatness—**Nimrod**, who began to rule over Babylon: "And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel." Like every charismatic leader, Nimrod was not content with partial rule; he sought global dominion. As our Sages taught (Chullin 89a): "I gave greatness to Nimrod, and he said: 'Come, let us build a city.'"

But how would Nimrod draw people to follow him? What could he offer? He understood early on that the best way to win the masses was to promise them wealth, comfort, and security. How could this be achieved? Free public transportation, low rent with no increases, government-run markets where everyone is equal, free healthcare, and so on.

But where would the funding come from? The answer is simple—**take from the rich** and establish a **socialist-communist government.**

The Sages (ב זבחים קיג, ב) comment on the city *Shinar*, saying its name implies "it shakes out its wealthy." Yet this was not done all at once—it was a slow process: high taxation and economic pressure until the wealthy were gradually stripped of their assets.

Still, Nimrod knew this alone would not suffice. Others had promised equality before him. He needed something greater, deeper, more inspiring. He needed to **found a religion.** A religion does not necessarily require a god—it can be built around an idea, a lofty ideal that captures the hearts of the masses. But every religion needs certain elements: a goal with a plan, an enemy to fight, a place of worship, and sacrifices.

The goal was clear—to create absolute social equality. The plan was to unite everyone under one grand project that would consume their efforts, hearts, and minds. The chosen project was the **Tower**, symbolizing the ideology Nimrod preached. The Tower would serve not just as a monument but as the **center of worship** for this

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new faith.

Like every movement or religion, there had to be a common enemy—someone or something that all could unite against. Without an enemy, there is no unifying force. Thus they found their “villain” in

God Himself. As the pasuk says, *“He was a mighty hunter before Hashem,”* which Rashi explains to mean: he ensnared people with words, turning them to rebel against Hashem. Now that there is a common enemy, everyone can direct their anger and frustration toward them; leaders can channel the crowd’s resentment outward. Since every person experiences failures and hardships in life, human nature seeks to avoid self-blame. Instead, people look for external causes to justify their shortcomings. Once a convenient villain is found, personal failures and disappointments are redirected away from oneself and projected onto that shared scapegoat.

In essence, Nimrod created a new religion and social order built on uniting the people around the dream of equality, while designating Hashem as the great oppressor to be overthrown. In his eyes, Hashem was to blame for the Flood in Noah’s time, for His “arrogance” over the dwellers of the earth (Rashi 11:1). Thus, Nimrod provided the perfect framework: confiscate the wealth of the rich, redistribute it “fairly,” and rally the people together against their supposed common enemy—the creator Himself. Nimrod’s system was both **economic and psychological**: control over property combined with control over emotion and belief.

Immediately, he set his plan into motion: *“And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.”* Rashi explains that this was a unified movement to rise up against Hashem. Everyone had to contribute equally, giving up all they owned for the “greater good.”

The chosen goal was to build a **universal tower** symbolizing their ideology—a project meant to fix the world “once and for all.” Nimrod stirred the multitudes with visions of a new era, preaching that all the world’s suffering came from the primitive faith in one God, a



dark and oppressive religion that had brought only floods, destruction, and death.

But what about the sacrifices? Every religion needs them. The Sages tell us that human life became cheap in the pursuit of this ideal.

When a brick fell from the Tower, they mourned it; yet when a worker fell to his death, no one paid attention. Human beings became mere tools—**sacrifices upon the altar of ideology.**

The religion of equality repeats itself throughout history. It reemerges in new guises, wrapped in fresh slogans, yet always follows the same pattern: it sweeps the masses with promises of justice and hope, ignites dreams of a radiant future—and ends in devastation. It leaves behind economic collapse, moral decay, and spiritual ruin. Even today, we witness the return of this cunning movement, cloaked in the modern garments of “compassion” and “equality,” but beneath its enlightened veneer lies the same ancient root—the desire to erase personal responsibility, to dethrone the Creator, and to en-

throne man and the state in His place.

In New York, a new movement has erupted, led by a man who promises the same old panacea: “equality for all” — free transit, heavy taxation of the wealthy — but in practice, it scapegoats particular communities, especially the Jewish community. The villain today, in his eyes, is both the Jew and the police; therefore, he vows to defund the police and globalize the intifada. The movement’s leaders vilify Israel as a “genocidal apartheid” state and call for its destruction. They meet with jihadist figures while publicly vowing to “defund the police.” This new ideology spreads by inflaming and exciting crowds.

In contrast, we must do everything in our power to protect the city we live in. Make sure that not only you, but also your family members, neighbors, and friends — including those from shul — go out and vote. Every single vote counts toward shaping this election and protecting our community and our city.

THE BUILDING OF THE BEIT HAMIKDASH BY PRESIDENT TRUMP

Last week, a Jewish reporter at a White House briefing posed an intriguing question to the press secretary:

“Since President Trump will be remembered for generations as the greatest leader of our time, has the topic of building the Beit HaMikdash in Jerusalem ever been discussed?”

The spokeswoman politely replied that it had not been brought up. Beyond the curiosity of the question itself, it raises a fascinating halachic discussion.

Will the Third Beit HaMikdash be built by human hands, or will it descend from Heaven fully constructed?

And if it is to be built by people, may a non-Jew participate in its construction, or must it be built solely by Jews?

It is commonly believed that the Third Beit HaMikdash will descend from Heaven, already completed. This view is found in Rashi (Sukkah 41a) and Tosafot (Shevuot 15b). However, what is less well known is that many disagree with this position—and even those who agree often interpret it non-literally.

Indeed, the Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Tisa 13) and the Zohar

(Bereishit 28) seem to support Rashi’s opinion:

“The verse says (Zechariah 2), ‘I, says Hashem, will be for her a wall of fire round about.’ Therefore, on this mountain, the Beit HaMikdash will be built by Hashem and will endure for all generations. Of this it is said (Haggai 2), ‘Greater shall be the glory of this latter house than of the former,’ for the first was built by man, and this one shall be built by the Holy One. Thus it says (Tehillim 127), ‘Unless Hashem builds the house, its builders labor in vain.’”

On the other hand, the Rambam rules that there is a positive commandment to build the Beit HaMikdash—an obligation upon all Israel, undisputed by any authority. Therefore, to passively wait for a Heavenly structure is to neglect this mitzvah.

Similarly, the Talmud Yerushalmi (Megillah 1:11) states that in the future, the Jewish people themselves will rise up and build the Beit HaMikdash. The Meiri (Sukkah 41a) also writes that it will be built by human hands, and the Rambam explicitly states that the Third Beit HaMikdash will be built by Mashiach.

Is this merely a halachic disagreement, or can these views be

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reconciled? How can we harmonize the Midrash and Zohar, which describe a Heavenly structure, with the Yerushalmi and Rambam, which describe a human-built Mikdash?

The commentaries offer several approaches: The Maharam Shik (Yoreh De'ah 213) distinguishes between two types of redemption. If Israel is not worthy—what the prophets call *be'itah* (in its due time)—the Beit HaMikdash will be built by man. But if the people are meritorious and the redemption is hastened—*achishenah*—then Hashem will cause it to descend from Heaven, representing a higher spiritual level.

The Mahari"l Diskin (cited in *Aruch LaNer*, note 362) suggests a novel approach: part of the Beit HaMikdash will indeed descend ready-made from Heaven, as described in Midrash Tanchuma, but its doors will be constructed by human hands—fulfilling the statement of the Yerushalmi.

Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, author of *Aruch LaNer*, offers another explanation: the people of Israel will build the physical structure, and afterward Hashem will infuse it with holiness and Divine Presence.

In any case, it would seem that the Beit HaMikdash cannot be built by non-Jews, since it must be constructed *lishmah*—for the sake of Heaven. The Torah says, “And they shall make Me a sanctuary, and I shall dwell among them” (Shemot 25:8). Rashi explains: “They shall make for My Name- Lishmah, a house of holiness.” A non-Jew is not qualified to perform actions requiring such intention.

However, Rav Asher Weiss cites the *Tiferet Yisrael* (Middot 1:1), who writes that the Beit HaMikdash may indeed be built with the assistance of non-Jews. As precedent, he notes that King Hiram of Tyre sent craftsmen to help King Shlomo build the First Temple, and the pasuk says, “Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks” (Yeshayahu 61:5).

Rav Bachya ben Asher (Vayikra 11:4) goes even further, writing that the Roman Empire itself will play a role in building the Third Temple: “In the Midrash Tanchuma it is taught that the Roman kingdom is compared to a pig, for in the future the Holy One will ‘return’ upon them the attribute of judgment. Some versions read that He will ‘return the crown to its former glory.’ The meaning is this: the first two Temples were built by Israel—King Shlomo from the tribe of Yehudah built the First, and Zerubavel, also from Yehudah, built the Second, with the permission of Cyrus. But the Third Temple will be

built by this very nation of Rome, of which it is said, ‘He will return the crown to its former glory,’ since they were the ones who destroyed it.”

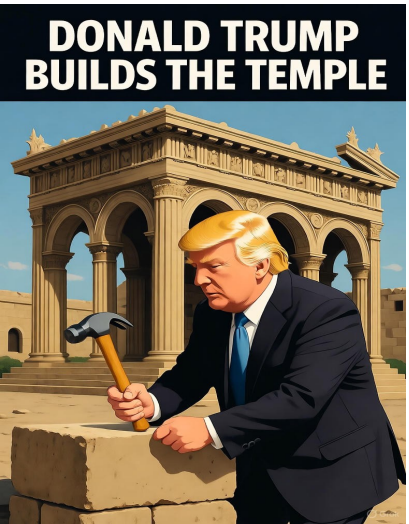
Rav Asher Weiss explains that this does not mean the non-Jews will physically build the Mikdash. Rather, they will assist in its preparation—by removing obstacles or providing resources. He supports this from the Talmud (Shabbat 119b), which says that even the study of Torah by children should not be interrupted for the building of the Mikdash. Obviously, this does not mean children would do the actual building—since intention *lishmah* is required—but that they might assist indirectly, such as by helping raise funds or organizing logistics.

In this light, since President Trump is viewed as the contemporary head of the Western Roman world—identified by the early commentators as representing modern Christendom—the question posed to the White House was not far-fetched. According to Rav Bachya’s view, Rome indeed plays a role in the rebuilding of the Third Temple—not by constructing it themselves, but by aiding the process: removing political opposition, supporting Jerusalem, and providing the means necessary for its realization.

One can also argue that by posing such a question publicly—viewed by people around the world—the reporter has already advanced the conversation. Bringing the topic of the Beit HaMikdash into public discourse is itself a step closer to its actual rebuilding and may even draw the attention of the President, who might now begin to consider the idea seriously.

There are various sources in the *sefarim* indicating that we, as a nation, must actively make the necessary efforts to advance the cause of rebuilding the Beit HaMikdash. However, there are several prerequisites that must still be fulfilled even after the Beit HaMikdash is built. To enter the holy areas and bring offerings, we will need the *parah adumah* (red heifer) for purification, accurate identification of the true *kohanim* (*Meyuchasim*), the *bigdei kehunah* (priestly garments), and other essential elements—each of which warrants its own detailed discussion.

May we merit soon, speedily in our days, to witness the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash.



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