

Isaiah's Theory of Relativity

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Sometimes I wonder what the Lubavitcher Rebbe was really up to in the Physics Department of the University of Berlin in the 1930's with Albert Einstein. We know he audited Einstein's lectures. We have eyewitness testimony that he annotated some of Einstein's blackboard notes after class for the benefit of other students. We even know that an American high-security military delegation came to 770 for a lengthy private audience to seek the Rebbe's advice on nuclear theory.

But my curiosity doesn't arise from any of that. My curiosity arises from the fact that very often when I read the Rebbe's sichos, maamarim and letters, I get whiff of some secret two-way synergy between Torah and science that the Rebbe has gotten to the bottom of in two ways: From the top down (from Torah to science), as well as from the bottom up (from science to Torah).

The Sicha of Shabbos Nachamu 5751 is a case in point. The sicha analyzes the Haftora's opening words, "Nachamu, nachamu ami - Be comforted, be comforted my people." The doubling of the word "Nachamu" tells us that we should be equally comforted for the destruction of the First Temple as well as for the Second, since the Third Temple and the ultimate redemption will last forever.

But if the point is the singular redemption, why not just say "Nachamu" once? What difference does it make how many Temples were destroyed?

The Rebbe explains that the two Temples were not identical. The First Temple was qualitatively greater. It had the Ark of the Testimony with the two tablets of stone written by G-d Himself. The divine presence was tangible there and there were many miracles on a daily basis. None of that was present in the Second Temple.

The Second Temple, although inferior qualitatively was quantitatively greater. It was physically larger and stood for a larger number of years.

Since the Third Temple will be incomparably greater both qualitatively and quantitatively the word "Nachamu" is repeated to emphasize that our future will be magnificent in both dimensions.

The Rebbe resolves a number of contrasting themes in the same way.

Parshas Va'eschanan, which we always read on this Shabbos, focuses on Moshe's destiny to remain outside of Israel and Yehoshua's mission to bring the Israelites into the land. Moshe is likened to the sun, symbolizing a revelation from above, while Yehoshua is compared to the moon, our efforts below.

The Parsha also reiterates the Ten Commandments in Moshe's voice, a human revelation of divinity from below, in contrast to the way the same commandments were expressed at Sinai by Hashem himself, a revelation from Above.

Also, at Sinai the Jews were on the level of tzaddikim in synch with the revelation from Above, while for this iteration of the Ten Commandments, they were baalei teshuvah, requiring the rebuke of Moshe, a revelation from below.

In the geulah, all these dichotomies will be harmonized by a revelation which transcends yet integrates them both: The sun and the moon, Moshe and Yehoshua, above and below, quality and quantity, all will be one.

This is hinted at in the exact replication of the term "Nachamu." This pure plurality with no shade of difference, implies a progression to any and all pluralities, up to infinity. Hence it is an allusion to the Ayn Sof, the Infinite One whose revelation will compensate for any and all deficiencies until now.

Once I saw how the Rebbe equates quantity and quality in a Torah perspective, I was immediately reminded of Einstein's integration of matter (quantity) and energy (quality) in his famous equation, $E=mc^2$, the founding principle of nuclear energy.

This helps us resolve a number of other problems, too. For example, how can the divine service of a little person like me make a difference in the whole big world? When we subdue our materialistic nature, true it's only a tiny victory, but as Einstein predicted and nuclear power production demonstrates, the transformation of even a tiny amount of matter generates an enormous amount of energy.

And if that's the case with the spiritual fission, the analogue of nuclear fission, where atoms are split to release such energy, imagine what can be achieved with spiritual fusion, uniting opposing forces, which is the analogue of nuclear fusion, a much more powerful process capable of so much more.

In recent years, incredible strides have been made in a highly controversial technology called "Cold Fusion," the ability to unite atoms at roughly room temperature so that they release useable energy without all the dangers of regular atomic reactions. Once established, this technology alone can totally eliminate much of the world's dependence on Arab oil, thereby liberating billions of people both economically and politically. In 2004 I had the privilege of documenting some of Prof. Herman Branover's pioneering research in this field.

One lesson we can learn from Cold Fusion is this: Things that even recently were considered to be unmanageably powerful, difficult and expensive to control, and hence completely impractical to implement, can suddenly become within reach. Once established, anyone can use it and thereby change the world for good.

The same is true about P'nimius HaTorah, Kabbala and Chassidus. Not long ago people said "Stay away! It's dangerous! It's impractical. We have alternatives." Today, it's teachings have become mainstream, even ubiquitous.

And the same is true about Moshiach and Geulah. Once considered an unrealistic distant dream, premature and even dangerous, today we see that the world is ready - ready to fuse the lights of tohu with the vessels of tikkun, to fuse matter and energy, quality and quantity, in the true and ultimate fusion of all things physical and all things spiritual in the true and complete redemption with Moshiach NOW!