



The Lyrical Message of Lecha Dodi

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E4)

*What comes to your mind when you think of Shabbos? Do you think of the special food? Of the Tefilos? Of resting? How far down the list would we find the **בית המקדש**?*

The author of Lecha Dodi

רבי שלמה הלוי אלקבץ lived for the first 76 years of the 16th Century. Most of his adult life was spent in the holy city of צפת, where he, together with his close circle of מקובלים, had moved from Turkey. His close circle included the great ר"י קארו, the אלשיך, and the רמ"ק (his brother-in-law). רבי שלמה was a מקובל, scholar, and poet and his לכה דודי was universally accepted as the poetic welcome to the holy Shabbos.

The themes of Lecha Dodi

The universally accepted פיוט to welcome the Shabbos contains only an introductory message about Shabbos. The first two stanzas announce the themes of Shabbos: First, that Hashem, in His absolute unity, announced both the שמור and זכור of Shabbos simultaneously. Second, that Shabbos is the source of all blessings. After these opening stanzas, there are six stanzas that focus on the yearning for the restoration of the Mikdash and the resurrection of our downtrodden People destined to rise from the dust of their exile to worship there. (Those who recite Lecha Dodi on YomTov only recite those first two stanzas, and

not the later six stanzas, in keeping with the joyous YomTov spirit.)

The structure of the פיוט begs us to understand the connection between welcoming the Shabbos and yearning for the ביהמ"ק. Rav Alkabetz makes the connection.

Yerushalayim and Shabbos

The Gemara¹ teaches that our violation of Shabbos enabled the חורבן. Somehow, without Shabbos there is no Mikdash.

Conversely, the Midrash² teaches that our redemption will be in the merit of Shabbos. Our observance of two שבחות, says the Gemara,³ would usher in the redemption. With Shabbos, there can be Mikdash.

The parallels between Shabbos and Mikdash

Rav Shimshon Pincus זצ"ל wrote about the connection between Shabbos and Mikdash in his Sefer, שבת מלכתא. He mentions that:

1. The 39 activities which we refrain from to establish the sanctity of Shabbos are precisely

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¹ שבת קיט :

² ויקרא רבה ג:א :

³ שבת קיח :



KI HEIM CHAYEINU

כי הם חיינו



Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

those that were needed for constructing the Mikdash.

2. The Menorah finds its parallel in our Shabbos candles.
3. Our Challahs echo the לחם הפנים. (There are Rebbes who even put out 12 Challahs apart from the required two. The Vilna Gaon even suggested that we divide our two Challahs at each meal in half thus making 12 parts to commemorate the לחם הפנים.) Indeed, the table itself reflects the שולחן upon which the לחם הפנים were placed.
4. Our distinct Shabbos clothing echoes the בגדי כהונה.
5. Shabbos is associated with song, recalling the שירי הלויים in the Mikdash.
6. Perhaps the custom to adorn Shabbos with flowers recalls the fragrance of the קטורה, which ensured that the בית ה' would have an inspiring aroma.⁴
7. We could also add that the presence of wine recalls the libation of wine associated with every Korban.

The list goes on and on.

Back to Lecha Dodi

We are now more keenly aware of the message that Rav Alkabetz is sharing with us. If we want our Shabbos to be elevated to קדושה and not

remain on the pedestrian level of חול, then our thoughts must turn to the Mikdash, which is the source of קדושה to elevate the mundane world.

If you read the six stanzas referring to the restoration you will notice a pattern of upward, elevated spirit. Perhaps, like the days of the week, we take another step up and then another until the 7th stanza when we are ready to turn around and welcome the Shabbos bride, with real joy, both in the sanctity of שבת and of מקדש.

Our relationship with Hashem depends on our connection with קדושה. That קדושה surely includes שבת, but it is incomplete without מקדש.⁵

A story about Lecha Dodi

Rabbi Yakov Feitman recently wrote a wonderful book called Blueprints. On page 58 he recounts an incident in which a Nazi ישרי went into a Shul with three grenades, intending to cause as much loss of life as possible. As he slipped into the Shul on Friday night, the community davening turned around for the last stanza of Lecha Dodi, בואי בשלום. Assuming that they were all turning to confront the lone attacker, he turned and bolted, dropping his grenades as he ran, causing a small fraction of the damage that he had intended.

Takeaway: I will focus on Shabbos as a catalyst for the redemption and the rebuilding of the Bais HaMikdash.

⁴ The Gemara (שבת לב) reports that רשב"י saw an elderly man bringing הדסים home to add fragrance to שבת. Perhaps the tradition of bringing flowers into the home is a by-product of those הדסים.

⁵ ed note: Both Shabbos and Mikdash are referred to as הגדול והקדוש. See the third Brocha of ברכת המזון and רצה within it.