

ב"ה
**Torah
Tidbits**

ISSUE 1669

UNITED
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JULY 18TH 2026 - ד' אב תשפ"ו

דברים - DEVARIM

AVOT 3 | SHABBAT CHAZON



Breaking Out of the Straits
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**Beyond the Ruins: Finding God
Where We Least Expected Him**
Jen Airley Page 84



BEIT HAMIKDASH:
IN THE MAKING

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YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT DEVARIM ZMANIM

CANDLES 7:09 PM • EARLY 6:17 PM • HAVDALA 8:26 PM • RABBEINU TAM 9:02 PM



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IMPORTANT REMINDERS

 Earliest Kiddush Levana, 3 Days After Molad: 5 Av/ Sat. night July 18

7 Days After Molad 9 Av: Wed. night July 22

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Av /Wed. night July 29

It is customary to recite Kiddush Levana on the night immediately following Tisha B'av

 *The Fast of Tisha BeAv* begins Wednesday evening (July 22) at sundown (Jerusalem: 7:45pm)
and the Fast concludes on Thursday night at 8:11pm (Jerusalem)

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



	DEVARIM			VA'ETCHANAN		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	7:09	6:17	8:26	7:05	6:15	8:22
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	7:26	6:20	8:28	7:23	6:17	8:23
Beit Shemesh/RBS	7:28	6:18	8:27	7:24	6:15	8:22
Gush Etzion	7:25	6:18	8:26	7:21	6:15	8:22
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	7:27	6:20	8:29	7:23	6:17	8:24
Modiin/Chashmonaim	7:26	6:19	8:27	7:22	6:16	8:23
Netanya	7:27	6:20	8:29	7:23	6:17	8:24
Be'er Sheva	7:25	6:18	8:26	7:21	6:16	8:22
Rehovot	7:26	6:19	8:28	7:23	6:17	8:24
Petach Tikva	7:09	6:19	8:28	7:05	6:17	8:24
Ginot Shomron	7:26	6:19	8:28	7:22	6:16	8:23
Haifa / Zichron	7:18	6:20	8:30	7:14	6:17	8:25
Gush Shiloh	7:25	6:18	8:26	7:21	6:15	8:22
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	7:27	6:20	8:29	7:23	6:17	8:24
Givat Ze'ev	7:29	6:18	8:26	7:26	6:15	8:22
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	7:24	6:18	8:26	7:21	6:15	8:21
Ashkelon	7:27	6:20	8:28	7:23	6:17	8:24
Yad Binyamin	7:26	6:19	8:28	7:22	6:16	8:23
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	7:20	6:18	8:28	7:17	6:15	8:24
Golan	7:25	6:18	8:27	7:21	6:15	8:22
Nahariya/Maalot	7:17	6:20	8:30	7:13	6:17	8:25
Afula	7:26	6:19	8:28	7:22	6:16	8:24
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Devarim - 9:02 PM • Va'etchanan - 8:58 PM						

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat, Nahariya, Maalot and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Chulin 79



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OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
July 15 - 25 | 1 - 11 Av**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:41-4:49
Sunrise	5:41-5:47
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:12-9:16
Magen Avraham	8:29-8:33
Sof Zman Tefila	10:23-10:25
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:44-12:45
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:20
Plag Mincha	6:20-6:16
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:48-7:43



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RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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In the work of *chinuch*, of educating and raising the next generation, so much of what we teach comes down to understanding the appropriate way to act in different settings. Often the honest answer to a child's question about such-and-such situation is simply that it is not *matim*: it is not appropriate, it is not the right thing for this moment.

The FIFA World Cup is on many people's minds right now. If a child asks you why not go play a soccer game on Shabbat, the answer is because there is a fitting way to honor Shabbat, and every time and place has its appropriate way. This is true throughout our lives. A mature adult needs to know what is proper to wear at a wedding, a bar or bat mitzvah, or a *shiva* house. What to wear to see the Prime Minister, or the President.

Beyond protocol, in the end, it's about helping to create an atmosphere, a feeling, whether it is one of relaxation, happiness, respect, or somberness.

Hashem in the Torah, and Chazal following in His ways, also gave us tools to build that atmosphere. On Sukkot we are told *v'hayita ach sameach* that we should be filled with joy; on Pesach we are to sit down at the Seder and feel as though we ourselves are walking out of Egypt. We do certain actions, eat certain foods, and dress certain ways, to encourage those feelings and thoughts. Both the Torah and our sages understood the importance of placing our minds, hearts, and our longings where they need to be to show our values.

We are now in the midst of one of those periods. Chazal designated the three weeks

between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av as days to mourn and to feel what we are missing without the Beit HaMikdash. It was during these weeks that our enemies broke into Yerushalayim, and on Tisha B'Av that they burned the Beit HaMikdash, both the first and the second, nearly two thousand years ago. The very fact that we still sit here today with guidelines from our rabbis, not to take a haircut, not to buy or wear new clothing, not to have weddings and live concerts, tells us there is an atmosphere that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and our sages, want us to hold on to.

One of the magical parts of the Three Weeks is that since the prohibition is about music with instruments, we turn to a cappella, and a cappella lets us sing songs of real meaning, songs about the *churban*, about our yearning for the Beit HaMikdash and for *Moshiach*, that lift us and turn our hearts in the right direction, removing a focus on instrumental skills. That's something I find so beautiful.

What I am not so impressed with, however, is when sometimes I walk into a store with a religious radio station playing in the background, and the a cappella I hear has been produced, through technology, into music almost indistinguishable from the real thing. I ask myself honestly whether that is keeping me in the emotional space of the Three Weeks or pulling me out of it. For my part, I try to listen only to the kind of a cappella that genuinely prepares me for Tisha B'Av.

What I have found over the last four years is that my Three Weeks have become far more

emotional. Some of that surely comes from the years we have lived through, from Covid, from the war, from the soldiers and dear friends we have lost, from the impossibility of standing on Tisha B'Av and not feeling it. But much of it comes from something specific. Every year our team prepares a new Tisha B'Av video, and the work of making it, the filming and then the sitting with Nina Broder, our director of social media, and the rest of the team, watching each piece take shape from raw footage, draws me into the day of Tisha B'Av so powerfully.

This week I stood in my office with four of my incredible staff members watching one of those pieces, and I looked up to see four women beside me, with tears running down their faces. Let me be honest, I also had a tear of my own. I suddenly understood what a gift this work is. We have put well over a hundred hours into it, and I know its impact. People stop me in shuls in Israel, Los Angeles, Florida, New York, all over the world, to tell me that our video transformed their Tisha B'Av.

So I want to encourage each of you to find ways to make these Three Weeks your own. Go to the City of David, to the Kotel tunnels, to Machon HaMikdash, to any of the places and people working to show *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* how deeply we long for the Beit HaMikdash. Wishing you all an easy and meaningful fast. I hope our new video inspires you and brings a powerful sense of connection to Tisha B'Av. Transform these weeks into something that carries you to Tisha B'Av with a full heart, one that truly asks *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* to rebuild. If we can reach that place together,



then *Be'ezrat Hashem* we will have the Beit HaMikdash back among us very, very soon.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

(Video will be available on our Youtube channel erev Tisha B'Av)

<https://www.youtube.com/@theouisrael>



OU Israel...Beyond Kashrut

Meshivat Nefesh: Strengthening Circles of Care

Run by OU Israel, the Meshivat Nefesh program is a specialized initiative that trains over 100 compassionate women annually to become emotional and spiritual anchors in their communities. Participants are empowered with the skills and tools needed to offer emotional support and spiritual guidance, learning how to listen deeply, respond responsibly, and provide direction without judgment to girls who struggle quietly.

By working closely with local shuls, community centers, and welfare organizations, graduates return to their communities prepared to notice what others miss and to support these young women before their pain becomes a crisis.

This is an empowerment that multiplies, ultimately strengthening entire circles of care.

Each week we share one OU Israel initiative empowering lives and communities in our homeland, supporting English-speaking olim in their klita and supporting Israel's most vulnerable teens to rebuild trust, confidence, and a future.



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT DEVARIM

The book of Devarim is entirely different from the other 4 books of the Torah.

The people are standing at the banks of the Jordan river, ready to enter the land of Israel. Moshe is not going with them. So, he wants to give them a charge, a speech, some kind of direction, his thoughts.

He gives them a speech. For 30 chapters. That is a long, very long, speech.

The entire book is Moshe speaking. There is no “And G-d spoke to Moshe saying, teach the people of Israel”. It is all Moshe. And his thoughts.

The book is called Deuteronomy in English, while the Talmud calls it Mishneh Torah. They both mean two, as if to say this book is the review of the Torah, or the repetition of the Torah.

That is somewhat misleading. Moshe does not review the *entire* Torah. In fact, the parts he leaves out are quite striking. In this 30 chapter speech, he does not review even one story from Breishit, from Genesis. And no description of the story of Egypt. No descriptions of slavery. Or the plagues. Or the splitting of the Sea. Or of the instructions for the Mishkan. And there is almost no mention of most of the book of Vayikra relating to Tuma and Tahara and Offerings.

So, to call the book Deuto, the review of the Torah, is not accurate; the review is of *some*, selected stories and laws of the Torah.

Let's say we were delivering this speech.

Or were Moshe's speech writer. We know what he wants to convey: I am not going to be with the people in this grand adventure of conquering the land of Israel. And more importantly I will not be with them in setting up our unique Jewish society in the land. And living in a way to gain G-d's favour so we can be successful.

Moshe will get to addressing the challenges they are to face in life, in faith, in confrontation with idolatry of the land, in conducting war.

But it will take him until the next parsha to begin to address those weighty topics.

Our parsha is his introduction. How does Moshe want to begin this long speech? Where do you start?

The book of Devarim is Moshe's great speech before taking leave of his people; Parshat Devarim is the introduction to that speech.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 1:1-10)

Moshe related the events of the journey, the 11-day journey from Chorev to Kadesh Barnea. On 1 Shevat, year 40, Moshe related to the people all that G-d had instructed him about them. This was after the defeats of Sichon and Og, on the banks of the Jordan. He related: G-d instructed us to travel from Sinai and to take the land of Israel, the land promised to the forefathers. And I said: these people are now so numerous that I cannot bear them alone.

Moshe begins his parting words with a description of the journey to the Land of Israel. Not with the story of the Exodus. Not

even with the story of the giving of the Torah. Certainly not with any stories from Breishit.

You could have begun with religious beliefs. What we believe in. What are the most important mitzvot. Our origin story – Avraham. Or the other origin story, G-d's intervention in history to take us out of Egypt, an historical basis to our faith in Him.

No. His emphasis is the journey to the Land. And to get to the journey he begins on the days following Mt. Sinai, when we were ready to go to the Land.



2ND ALIYA (1:11-21)

I said then: Let's choose wise people to lead you. You agreed that this was a good idea. Wise leaders were appointed over thousands, hundreds, tens and officers of enforcement as well. I charged the judges saying: listen and rule fairly without bias. I commanded you in all the things you are to do. We traveled the desert to the Mount of the Emori, Kadesh Barnea. There I said: let's go without fear and take the Land.

It is curious that the first story Moshe feels a need to review is the appointing of the various upper court and lower court judges. After all, it doesn't seem to have anything to do with the march to the Land. In fact, there are other stories that do occur as part of the march, like the complaints for water that are simply skipped. Why mention the appointment of judges?

There is a twist of phrase from this story to the next. And that is perhaps why it is here.

In this story, I had an idea, to appoint judges. And you liked it. You agreed.

In the next story, you had an idea, to send spies. And I liked it. I agreed.

Moshe is emphasizing human agency. There are decisions that we need to make. Me, as leader. And you, as people. In our

decisions, sometimes we get it right. And sometimes we get it wrong. We have to take full responsibility for all our decisions. The ones we get right. And the ones we get wrong.



3RD ALIYA (1:22-38)

You approached me to send spies to scout out the Land. I thought that was a good idea, choosing the leaders of the tribes for the task. They toured and returned with fruits of the land exclaiming: The Land G-d is giving us is good. But you refused to go and rebelled against G-d saying: these have damaged our resolve telling us of the large people and the fortified cities. I insisted that G-d will fight the battle as He has done until now. But you did not trust in G-d Who has been guiding you by cloud and fire. You were told that all who do not believe they can enter the Land, will not enter the Land. And I too was told I would not enter; Yeshoshua will lead the people into the Land.

The first story Moshe tells is the spies. Failure.

But he abbreviates it. He relates: the spies brought back a good report. And you people decided you couldn't take the Land.

Wait, that's not what I remember. The spies came back with a long and eventually pessimistic report. In Bamidbar, it sounds like their bad report started a cascade of fear. Here, Moshe places the guilt at the feet of the people.

Perhaps Moshe is deliberately emphasizing responsibility. Just like I, Moshe says, admitted I needed help adjudicating all of you, you too need to know that it was not the fault of the spies but of you that we spent 40 years in the desert.

Blame for national failures cannot be laid only at the feet of the leaders. The people need to also bear full responsibility for their

decisions.

So how does Moshe begin his great speech? Responsibility. I admitted my weakness and agreed to a system of judges. You too need to accept your responsibility for this great adventure in the Land to succeed.



4TH ALIYA (1:39-2:1)

Upon hearing that you would not enter the Land, you regretted your sin. You said: let us go to the Land. But you were warned that G-d would not be with you in this and the Emori chased you away like bees to the region of Seir. We dwelt in Kadesh and Har Seir for a long time.

Here is lesson two. When we follow the Divine plan, we will succeed. When we venture off on our own, devoid of Divine support, then we will be chased away like bees. The image of the people scampering away as if chased by bees is satirical; with Divine assistance you have no defense. You ran defenseless, arms flailing.



5TH ALIYA (2:2-30)

It was time to travel northward. Do not confront the descendants of your brother Esav who dwell in Seir. Circle their land; pay for the food and water that you need from them. In addition, do not confront Moav for it is the rightful possession of the descendants of Lot. Past the land of Moav is Amon; do not confront Amon for it too is the rightful possession of the descendants of Lot. The region north of the Arnon is the land of Sichon and Og; those lands I have given to you. I offered to Sichon to pass through his land, but he refused; G-d made him stubborn so that we could take his land.

This description of our family ties with Esav and Lot is surprising; don't engage in war with Esav's descendants nor Lot's descendants. They are relatives. And we are to give

regard to those relatives. Yaakov's brother Esav settled in Seir. He deserves brotherly deference and hence leave him alone. Moav and Amon are nations from Lot, Avraham's nephew. Leave them alone as well; they are your relatives. Brothers, even when pursuing entirely different legacies, remain brothers nonetheless.



6TH ALIYA (2:31-3:14)

G-d told us to take the lands of Sichon in war. The lands were conquered up to the Gilad. Og confronted us in the region toward the Bashan and he too was conquered. Their lands were given to Reuven, Gad and half the tribe of Menashe.

These confrontations with Sichon and Og are the last stories in the book of Bamidbar, not too long ago. Moshe relates these stories right at the beginning of his long speech, even though if he were reviewing our history chronologically, they would have to wait 25 chapters. He does so to begin his long speech with success and with encouragement. Even though we spent 40 years in the desert as a result of the spies, but we then marched to the Land. With success.

Moshe will eventually want to warn the people, chastise them, tell them of their future failures: but that can all wait. Start with encouragement.



7TH ALIYA (3:15-22)

The lands on the east of the Jordan including the Gilad and the lands from the Kineret to the Dead Sea were settled by Reuven and Gad and half of Menashe. I instructed these tribes to join the battle for the Land of Israel and then to return to their lands.

This is a very large patch of land: on the east side of the Jordan from the Dead Sea all the way up to the Hermon has been conquered

and will be settled by the Jewish people. These early victories and Moshe's repetition of their stories allows Moshe to begin his long directives to the people on a high note, an optimistic one. The description until here is how we got to where we are. Now he will focus on the much more crucial directives: how to live *in* the Land.

HAFTORAH: YESHAYAHU 1:1-27

This week's *haftorah* is the third of a series of three "*haftarot* of affliction." Yeshayahu conveys to the Jewish people of a G-dly vision he experienced, chastising the residents of Judah and Jerusalem for having rebelled against G-d. He criticized them for repeating their errors and not engaging in *teshuva*. *"Woe to a sinful nation, a people heavy with iniquity, evildoing seed, corrupt children. They forsook G-d; they provoked the Holy One of Israel."* The navi employs harsh words by comparing the Jewish leaders to the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Yeshayahu then speaks gentler words, encouraging the people to repent sincerely and to perform acts of justice and *chesed* towards the needy, orphans and widows, and promising them the best of the land in return for their obedience. *"If your sins prove to be like crimson, they will become white as snow; if they prove to be as red as crimson dye, they shall become as wool."* The *haftorah* concludes with an uplifting promise that G-d will one day reestablish Israel's judges and leaders, when *"Zion shall be redeemed through justice and her penitents through righteousness."*

The first word of the *haftorah* is "*Chazon*" ("The vision"). The Shabbat when this *haftorah* is read, the Shabbat before Tisha b'Av, is thus called "Shabbat Chazon," the "Shabbat of the Vision." ■



STATS

44th of the 54 sedras; first of 11 in Devarim.

Written on 196.5 lines (rank: 26th). 5 parshiyot; 1 open, 4 closed.

105 pEsukim - ranks 32, 6th in Devarim tied with Chaye Sara, but larger.

1548 words - ranks 26th, 6th in Devarim.

5972 letters - ranks 24, 5th in Devarim tied with Vayeishev, but smaller.

Jump in rankings from pEsukim to words & letters due to relatively long pesukim.



MITZVOT

2 mitzvot - both prohibitions.

One of only three sedras that have only prohibitions (LO TAASEI).

Vayishlach and B'shalach are the other two, with one LAV each.

Contains 6 of the 613 mitzvot, all positive. One of only six sedras that have only positive mitzvot.

**It is with great sorrow
that we announce the passing of**

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CHANA BAT YITZCHOK EIZIK a"h

Formerly of Elizabeth, NJ

Leonard Lauer, Rechovot
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Gershon Markowitz, Har Nof

**Shiva until Sunday Morning
in Rechovot**

A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOKH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

זולתי כלב בן יפנה הוא יראנה (א:לו)

"Except for Calev, the son of Yefuneh; he shall see it." (1:36)

The Pasuk highlights that Calev and Yehoshua were allowed to enter the Land of Israel for not participating in the sin of defaming the land with the spies. If so, neither Moshe nor Aharon vilified the Land of Israel, why were they denied entry?

Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin (Mahril Diskin, 1818-1898, Jerusalem) explains the incremental reaction to the sin of the spies in Parshat Shelach. Initially, the spies succumbed to a plague (Bamidbar 14:37). Subsequently, the generation older than twenty years, perished in the desert (Bamidbar 14:29). Lastly, Moshe and Aharon were denied entrance into the Land "Im Atem"-"Even you" (14:30). The death of Moshe before the people entering the Land, was an additional punishment to the Israelites and a lessening in the gift of receiving the Land. That is why Moshe laments that G-d flared his anger also against him, to further punish the peoples (1:37). As significant as Calev and Yehoshua were, one could not compare what would have transpired had Moshe entered the Land with the Israelites.

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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"A Time and a Place"

"He was in the wrong place at the wrong time." We have all heard this phrase, and many of us have used it. It is especially apt when it is used to describe a person with many virtues and talents who just can't use them because of the social or physical circumstances in which he finds himself. That such

a person faces profound frustration is, to say the least, obvious.

Many Jewish immigrants came to the United States blessed with spiritual gifts and intellectual skills but found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. For you see, America was viewed in two very different ways by the Jews back in the *shtetl* of the old country. On the one hand, it was seen as the *goldene medina*, the golden country, the land of material opportunity. But on the other hand, it was also viewed as the *treifene medina*, the non-kosher country, the lands of insurmountable religious challenges.

The usual "success stories" of Jewish immigration to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are narratives of "making it" financially, but utterly "losing it" from the point of view of traditional Jewish culture. American Jewish fiction, and even American Jewish history, know these narratives well and relate them in graphic detail.

What is largely missing from this body of literature are the stories of those who came to these shores imbued with religious fervor, committed to traditional observance. Lacking are the stories of men and women who found it difficult, if not impossible, to live out their faith convictions in this new place and time.

Particularly lacking are the narratives of the struggles that rabbinic leaders had in coping with the *treif*, albeit golden, American environment. One such rabbinic leader was Rabbi Jacob Joseph, the first and only Chief Rabbi in the history of New York City, who died 108 years ago, and whose *yahrzeit* was last week,

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י"ג מנחם אב

May the Torah learning
in this issue of Torah Tidbits
be לעילוי נשמותיהם

The Berger Family

the 24th of *Tammuz*. How ironic it is that his *yahrzeit* fell only a few days after the ultimate American holiday, July 4th.

Rabbi Jacob Joseph, a disciple of the master moralist Israel Salanter, was a rising star in the Lithuanian rabbinic constellation, a gifted orator, a noted pedagogue, and an ardent proponent of meticulous ethical behavior. He accepted a call to the New York Chief Rabbinate, and he soon found himself "in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Rabbi Joseph was certainly not the first great man to find himself in a human context in which he was misunderstood, and in which he was beset by deep disappointment, nay disillusionment. I have long insisted that the first such individual was Moses himself, which brings us to this week's Torah portion, *Devarim*.

This week, we begin not only a new portion but an entirely new book, the book of Deuteronomy. This book, *Sefer Devarim*, can be read as a personal retrospective of Moses as he reviews the highlights of his life, and particularly of his relationship with the Jewish people. Time and again he expresses the frustrations he experienced in trying to bring his followers to the ideas and practices which he espoused.

There can be no greater frustration than that experienced by one who has encountered God face to face, but who cannot convey His message to his audience. And hence we have verses such as, "I cannot bear the burden of you by myself" (*Deuteronomy* 1:9). Or, and this the reader intones with the classic melody of lament, "How can I bear unaided the trouble of you, and the burden, and the bickering!" (*Deuteronomy* 1:12)

Moses had a unique set of personal experiences, unprecedented visions of the divine,



natural tendencies toward all that is just and right, and above all, unparalleled humility. And he was predestined to live in a specific time and place. But how often he must have felt that this was the "wrong time at the wrong place," and certainly, "the wrong people."

Millennia after Moses came Rabbi Jacob Joseph. He was born in Eastern Europe, educated in its old-fashioned yet positively formative schools, and began a successful rabbinic career. He spoke widely and wrote prolifically. His themes were the importance of ethical behavior and the need to be considerate of other human beings. He was, by nature, meditative and would often take his young students into the fields and forests for their lessons. He was an expert in *halacha* and meticulous in its observance.

And then he was thrown into the American fray. He encountered fraud where he expected honesty, and violence when he was

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accustomed to gentleness. He found a land where materialism and profit were primary values, and where spirituality and charity were scoffed at and mocked.

He suffered a stroke at an early age, and he died in anonymity and neglect. His funeral was attended by thousands, but it became the scene of a vicious anti-Semitic riot which made the front page of the newspapers of the time. He was indeed a great man in the "wrong place at the wrong time."

One can only speculate about what Rabbi Joseph's accomplishments would have been had he lived in a different place and a different time. For the United States of America is still a *goldene medina* for the Jewish people, a land of religious freedom unprecedented in our history. But it is no longer a *treifene medina*, for it has been transformed into a land of spiritual opportunity and religious accomplishment for our people.

Rabbi Jacob Joseph would have been proud of the "yeshiva constructed upon his grave." The Rabbi Jacob Joseph School was known as the mother of all yeshivot when it was situated on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and when I was a student there. It has since been transplanted to a new locale and continues to educate hundreds of Jewish children.

His writings have now been compiled and are available for all to see and study. And his

biography is incorporated into numerous anthologies of American Jewish history and into the history of the *Mussar* Movement, which tried so valiantly to emphasize the importance of ethical behavior in our religious tradition.

Like many others who experienced the frustration of being in "the wrong place at the wrong time," he left a lasting impact on our place and our time. And so did his predecessor, Moses our teacher, so very long ago.

Although in Moses' case we can only conjecture about his inner feelings, in the case of Rabbi Joseph, we know from records of his final sermons that he indeed believed he "was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Our tradition, however, teaches us a contrary lesson, namely that none of us are in the wrong place or wrong time. Each of us has a mission in life, and the Almighty Himself chooses the time in history and the place in the world where that mission is to be accomplished. Moses was the right man at the right time. That is apparent. And even Rabbi Joseph, although he could not realize it in his lifetime, served a specific purpose as a transitional figure in American Jewish history, helping to bridge the divide between the doomed *shtetls* of Eastern Europe and the *traif* but changing New World.

That we all ultimately are in the "right place at the right time" is the deeper meaning of teaching of our sages: "Despise no one and disdain nothing, for there is no one who does not have his hour, and there is nothing that does not have its place." (*Avot* 4:3) ■



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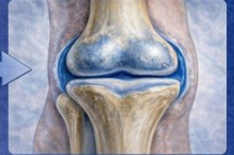
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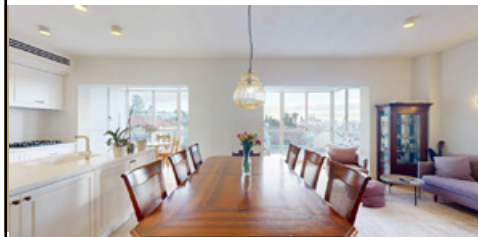
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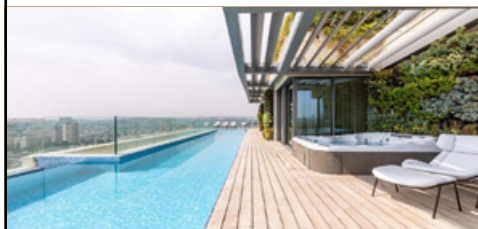
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Tzedek: Justice and Compassion

As Moses begins his great closing addresses to the next generation, he turns to a subject that dominates the last of the Mosaic books, namely justice:

I charged your judges at that time: 'Hear the disputes among your people and judge fairly, between one person and another, whether Israelite or migrant. Do not show partiality in judgment: listen equally to the small and the great. Do not be intimidated by any man, for judgment belongs to God. Any case that is too difficult for you, bring it to me, and I will hear it.' (Deut. 1:16-17)

Tzedek, "justice", is a key word in the book of Devarim – most famously in the verse:

Pursue justice, only justice, so that you may live and possess the land that the Lord your God is giving you. (Deut. 16:20)

The distribution of the word *Tzedek* - and its derivative *tzedakah* - in the Five Books of Moses is anything but random. It is overwhelmingly concentrated on the first and last

books, Genesis (where it appears 16 times) and Deuteronomy (18 times). In Exodus it occurs only four times and in Leviticus five. All but one of these are concentrated in two chapters: Exodus 23 (where 3 of the 4 occurrences are in two verses, 23:7-8) and Leviticus 19 (where all 5 incidences are in chapter 19). In Numbers, the word does not appear at all.

This distribution is one of many indications that the Chumash (the Five Books of Moses) is constructed as a chiasmus – a literary unit of the form ABCBA. The structure is this:

A: Genesis – the prehistory of Israel (the distant past)

B: Exodus – the journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai

C: Leviticus – the code of holiness

B: Numbers – the journey from Mount Sinai to the banks of the Jordan

A: Deuteronomy – the post-history of Israel (the distant future)

The *leitmotiv* of *tzedek/tzedakah* appears at the key points of this structure – the two outer books of Genesis and Deuteronomy, and the central chapter of the work as a whole, Leviticus 19. Clearly the word is a dominant theme of the Mosaic books as a whole.

What does it mean? *Tzedek/tzedakah* is almost impossible to translate, because of its many shadings of meaning: justice, charity,

righteousness, integrity, equity, fairness and innocence. It certainly means more than strictly legal justice, for which the Bible uses words like *mishpat* and *din*. One example illustrates the point:

If the person is poor, do not go to sleep with the pledge in your possession. You must return his pledge by sunset, so that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you. This will be accounted to you as a righteous act before the Lord your God. (Deut. 24:12-13)

Tzedakah cannot mean legal justice in this verse. It speaks of a situation in which a poor person has only a single cloak or covering, which he has handed over to the lender as security against a loan. The lender has a legal right to keep the cloak until the loan has been repaid. However, acting on the basis of this right is simply *not the right thing to do*. It ignores the human situation of the poor person, who has nothing else with which to keep warm on a cold night. The point becomes even clearer when we examine the parallel passage in Exodus 22, which states:

If you take your neighbour's garment as collateral, return it to him before the sun sets, because it is his only clothing, the sole covering for his skin. What else does he have in which to sleep? And if he cries out to Me, I will be listening: I am gracious. (Ex. 22:25-26)

The same situation which in Deuteronomy is described as *tzedakah*, in Exodus is termed compassion or grace (*chanun*). The late Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan translated *tzedakah* in Deut. 24 as "charitable merit". It is best rendered as "the right and decent thing to do" or "justice tempered by compassion".

In Judaism, justice – *tzedek* as opposed to *mishpat* – *must be tempered by compassion*. Hence the terrible, tragic irony of Portia's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*:

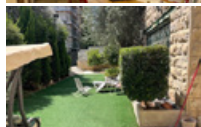


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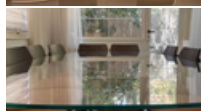
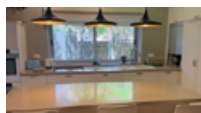
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The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes;

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;

His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,

Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;

And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore,
Jew,

Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;

And that same prayer doth teach us all to render

The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much

To mitigate the justice of thy plea ...

Shakespeare is here expressing the medieval stereotype of Christian mercy (Portia) as against Jewish justice (Shylock). He entirely fails to realise – how could he, given the prevailing culture – that “justice” and “mercy” are not opposites in Hebrew but are bonded together in a single word, *tzedek* or *tzedakah*. To add to the irony, the very language and imagery of Portia's speech (“It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven”) is taken from Deuteronomy:

May my teaching pour down like rain,
Let my speech fall like the dew,
Like gentle rain upon tender plants,
And like showers upon the grasses.
As I call out the name of the Lord,
Come, praise the greatness of our God.
The Rock, His work is whole,
For all His ways are justice.
A God of faith who does no wrong,
Just and upright is He. (Deut. 32:2-4)

The false contrast between Jew and Christian in *The Merchant of Venice* is eloquent testimony to the cruel misrepresentation of Judaism in Christian theology until recent times.

Why then is justice so central to Judaism? Because it is impartial. Law as envisaged by the Torah makes no distinction between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, home born or stranger. Equality before the law is the translation into human terms of equality before God. Time and again the Torah insists that justice is not a human artefact: “Do not

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be intimidated by any man, for judgment belongs to God.” Because it belongs to God, it must never be compromised – by fear, bribery, or favouritism. It is an inescapable duty, an inalienable right.

Judaism is a religion of love: You shall love the Lord your God; you shall love your neighbour as yourself; you shall love the stranger. But it is also a religion of justice, for without justice, love corrupts (who would not bend the rules, if he could, to favour those he loves?). It is also a religion of compassion, for without compassion law itself can generate inequity. Justice plus compassion equals *tzedek*, the first precondition of a decent society. ■

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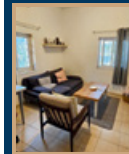
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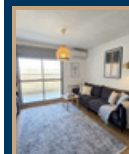


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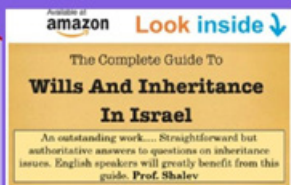
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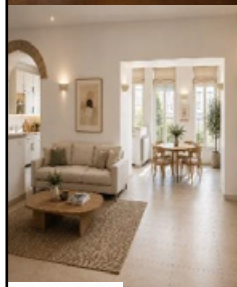
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BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER
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My father, a”h, was not able to complete his yeshiva education. He was the youngest of six children from a poor family who, therefore, was compelled to leave high school at the age of sixteen to help support his family. Nonetheless, my father continued to study what his father and his yeshiva taught him and, over the years, he used that knowledge to serve as Shamash, Shliach Tzibbur and Ba’al Kriah for his Bet Knesset – and, throughout his life, taught many others what he learned. I was blessed to be his “closest student” and, at this time of my life, I understand that what he taught me – what he TOLD me -remained in my mind and my heart even more profoundly than that which I studied from books or even that which I learned from my Rebbe’im

This Shabbat, we read the first words of Sefer D’varim and, likewise, we read the first words of Sefer Yishayahu. On this Shabbat, our haftarah reading will initiate the prophecies of Yishayahu HaNavi to his generation, as the Torah reading will commence with Moshe Rabbeinu’s final “speech” to the nation. And, although these truths are well-known and not at all surprising, Chazal see

these connections in a different light.

Our scholars note [in Tachuma: Ha’azinu Bet] how Yishayahu opens his first nevu’ah with the words: “**Shim’u shamayim v’ha’azinu eretz**” and Moshe Rabbeinu opens his final address to the nation with similar words: “**Ha’azinu hashamayin** va’adabera, **w’tishman ha’arets** imrei fi”. In fact, the similarity between the prophetic message of Yishayahu and the farewell speech of Moshe is more noteworthy than we would have first realized.

In his book “Hamevaser”, Rav Yigal Ariel points to the numerous similarities of themes that are found in both “Shirat Moshe” (Ha’azinu) and in Yishayahu’s “Chazon”.

Consider:

- Moshe reminded Israel that they are the **children** of Hashem: “Hu **Avicha** kanecha”
 - As did Yishayahu: “**Banim** gidalti v’romamti”
- Moshe condemned the nation for their lack of **understanding**: “V’ein bahem **tevunah**”
 - And so did Yishayahu: “Ami lo **hitbonan**”
- Moshe asked the people “how?” (“**eichah**”): “**Eicha** yirdof echad-elef...”
 - And Yishayahu echoed...: “**Eicha** hayeta l’zonah kirya ne’manah”
- Moshe equated the sinful nation to the corrupt of **S’dom** and **Amora**: “Ki mige-fen **S’dom** gafnam umishadmot **Amorah**”
 - Similarly, Yishayahu censured Israel...: “Kim’at k’**S’dom** hayinu, la’**Amorah** daminu”

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- Moshe closed his “shira” with a comforting promise of **retribution**: “**V’nakom** yashiv **l’tzarav**”
 - Yishayahu did so as well: “Hoy, enachem mit**zorai** v’**inokma** me’oyvai
- And, in conclusion, we find that both nevi'im concluded their respective messages with the common theme of “**Mishpat**”, justice:
 - Moshe said: “V’tochez **b’mishpat** yadi”
 - Yishayahu closed his nevu'ah with: “Tziyon **b’Mishpat** tipadeh”

Our Chachamim noted these similarities, and, undoubtedly, saw in them a significant lesson. But what might that lesson be?

I would humbly suggest that Yishayahu, addressing a generation influenced by foreign philosophies and values, a population turning away from Torat Moshe, understood that his message could not simply be one of warning or of possible punishment, nor one of reiteration or duplication of Hashem's laws. He may have felt that the most powerful – and impactful – way to re-educate this wayward generation would to echo the final words that the greatest of prophets shared with his nation – “Shirat Moshe”, Ha'azinu. It is for this reason that HaKadosh Baruch Hu placed in the mouth of this navi the message most likely to inspire the populace so lost and so aimless.

It would be the heartfelt words of the ‘Father of the Prophets’ (“Av Ha-nevi'im”) that could best remain in the hearts and minds of the children.

.....I know that my father's words did! ■

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Learning from the Present to Shape the Future

One of the central themes of Moshe Rabbeinu's final words to Bnei Yisrael is the idea of *tochacha* - rebuke that inspires growth. True rebuke is not merely criticism of the past, but rather it is guidance for the future. The deepest form of *tochacha* is when a person learns from the consequences of his own actions and allows those lessons to shape the direction of his life.

The Gemara in *Tamid* famously asks:¹

איזהו חכם? הרואה את הנולד

Who is wise? One who sees what is born [what emerges].

This definition differs from the well-known teaching in *Pirkei Avot*:

איזהו חכם? הלומד מכל אדם

*Who is wise? One who learns from every person.*²

1. Tamid 32a

2. Pirkei Avot 4:1

While *Pirkei Avot* defines wisdom as openness to learning, the Gemara in *Tamid* defines wisdom as the ability to perceive consequences before they fully unfold.

Rashi explains:³

הרואה את הנולד: המבין מלבו מה שעתיד להיות, קורות שעתידים לבוא, ולהיזהר מהן.

*One who understands in his heart what is destined to occur, the events that are likely to come, and guards himself accordingly.*³

A wise person does not merely react to life after events occur. He studies the present carefully enough to anticipate the future. He recognizes that every decision carries consequences and that current behavior shapes future reality.

This idea is reflected in *halacha* as well. The *Shulchan Aruch*⁴ advises that during the winter months one should not overeat at the daytime meal on Shabbat lest he be unable to eat *Seudah Shelishit*. The Poskim invoke the phrase:

חכם עיניו בראשו - הרואה את הנולד.

*A wise man has his eyes in his head, he sees what will result.*⁴ A wise person thinks ahead.

Yet the Eish Kodesh raises a penetrating question regarding the Gemara's wording. If the Gemara wished to describe someone who

3. Rashi, Tamid 32a.

4. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 291

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Dovid & Miriam Schachter
and family on the
Bar Mitzvah of **Moshe Pinchas**

Mazel Tov to the grandparents,
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sees the future, it should have said:

הרואה את העתיד להיוולד

One who sees that which will be born in the future.

The expression “*haroeh et hanolad*” literally means *one who sees what has already been born*. But if something already exists before us, what great wisdom is required to see it?

The *Eish Kodesh* answers with a profound reinterpretation: The wise person sees what has already emerged from his actions, and from this learns how to guard himself in the future. No human being truly knows the future. We are not prophets. The wisdom of *haroeh et hanolad* is not supernatural foresight. Rather, it is the ability to honestly analyze what one’s actions have already produced and to draw conclusions from them.

The fool rushes through life without reflection. Most people move through this world like a horse charging into battle. Life becomes mechanical. Events occur, experiences pass, opportunities for growth arise and yet nothing changes internally.

The *Eish Kodesh*’s imagery recalls a powerful parable often attributed to Rabbi Yisrael Salanter. The horses that pulled wagons for the *Chevra Kadisha* spent their entire lives accompanying funerals and carrying coffins to burial. One might think that constant exposure to mortality would inspire introspection and repentance. Yet the horses remained unchanged. Why? Because horses remain horses. Human beings, however, are not meant to live mechanically. We are meant to reflect, interpret, and grow.

This idea emerges powerfully in the Torah’s description of Bilam and Balak. After the dramatic revelations surrounding Bilam’s failed attempts to curse Bnei Yisrael, the Torah concludes simply: *And he went and returned to his place.*⁵ Nothing changed.

Despite witnessing extraordinary events, Bilam returned unchanged to the same life and worldview. He saw the events, but he did not become *roeh et hanolad*. He failed to extract meaning from what had already unfolded before him.

The wise person lives differently. He reflects upon his actions and sees what has emerged from them and draws

conclusions with respect to the manner in which to direct his path in the future. Wisdom is not merely intelligence. Wisdom is the courage to reflect honestly upon one’s life.

Every experience contains within it a message. Every success, failure, relationship, disappointment, and triumph leaves behind spiritual evidence. The question is whether we pause long enough to notice it.

This, explains the *Eish Kodesh*, is the essence of Moshe Rabbeinu’s *tochacha*. Moshe was not merely recounting historical failures. He was teaching Bnei Yisrael how to look at their history and extract lessons from it.

One of the greatest spiritual dangers is not failure itself, but living without reflection. A person can experience extraordinary moments, profound challenges, even painful setbacks, and yet continue unchanged, simply *returning to his place*. The Torah calls upon us to become *roeh et hanolad*: to study the patterns of our lives, to recognize what our



Piaseczno Rebbe zt"l

actions produce, and to use that awareness to shape a better future.

Every day leaves behind *nolad* - results, consequences and spiritual footprints. The wise person does not ignore them. He studies them carefully and asks: What is this experience teaching me? What direction are my actions leading me toward? Who am I becoming?

True wisdom is not seeing the distant future through prophecy. It is seeing the present with honesty. When a person learns from what has already *been born*, he gains the ability to transform the future. May we be able to internalize these messages and build a brighter future. ■

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When asked by Gustav VI, the King of Sweden, where he had been born, Agnon replied, “Your Majesty, like all Jews, I come from Jerusalem.”

In his legendary acceptance speech, Agnon addressed the honored assembly, and again spoke of his connection to our eternal capital: “As a result of the great catastrophe in which Titus of Rome destroyed the Holy City and Israel was exiled from its land, I was born in one of the cities of the Exile, Buczacz. But I always regarded myself as one

who was born in Jerusalem. *In a dream, in a vision of the night*, I saw myself standing with my brother Levites in the Holy Temple, singing with them the songs of David, King of Israel...”



Shmuel Yosef Agnon

In the Torah’s account of Yaakov Avinu fleeing his brother Eisav’s wrath, Yaakov is alone, surrounded by darkness, and sleeping on the cold ground. Suddenly, he experiences a “vision of the night”: he sees a ladder to Heaven with angels “ascending and descending”, and realizes he is in the future *Makom haMikdash*, the place of the Holy Temple.

Yaakov Avinu represents and expresses the *Midah* of *Tiferes*, ‘Splendor’, which is the quality of harmonious uniting of opposites. In his night vision, he sees a place and a time in which he and his brother will be in harmony and peace, in which the Jewish family will be reunited. When he awakens, he is inspired to ‘pray’, *V’shanti b’Shalom el Beis Avi* — “and I shall return to my father’s house *in peace* (28:21)....”

We too, through *Shalom* and brotherhood, are charged to restore the splendor and beauty of Am Yisrael; ‘Yaakov’ will then rise up from the ground, the dawn will break, and we will



return to *Beis Avi*.

Hishlich miShamayim Eretz Tiferes Yisrael: “He has cast down from heaven to earth the glory of Israel (Eicha, 2:1)” Reb Shlomo Halberstam, The Bobover Rebbe zy’a, explains this pasuk in connection to Yaakov Avinu: the glory (Tiferes) of Israel (Yaakov) is our *Achdus*, our togetherness, the oneness of our greater family. This is what was cast to the ground. Indeed as is well known and oft-quoted but tragically not yet internalized, the Temple was destroyed due to *Sinas Chinam*, baseless hatred (Gemara Yoma 9b). The Bobover Rebbe concludes: the rebuilding of the Temple will come through reclaiming our People’s *Tiferes*, our *Achdus* — our efforts toward *Shalom*.

The Halachos of Tisha B’av restrict us from *She’eilas Shalom*, greeting one another. How, really, can we wish each other *Shalom Aleichem* on a day where we deeply feel the lack of *Shalom* and *Shleimus* in the world? However, this year the Ninth of Av falls out on Shabbos, and the fasting and explicit grief are pushed off until Sunday. Therefore, we have the unique opportunity to connect with one another, express brotherhood by greeting each other with a *Shabbat Shalom*, even on the Ninth day of Av.

Consider: is there someone we are estranged from, a former business associate, an old classmate, friend or family member from whom we

have grown distant? Perhaps now is the right time, the opportune time, to extend a *She’eilas Shalom*.

It has been two thousand years since our “brother Levites” have sung those songs in the *Beis haMikdash*. May we extend *Shalom* and *Achdus* to our neighbors, sisters and brothers, and make efforts toward repairing relationships, and may this bring us closer to our birthplace, our father’s home.

~

Excerpt from Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah, forthcoming (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786) ■

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the “Baderech” series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.

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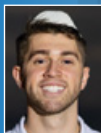
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For some, the difficulty begins with the language itself: how to punctuate the Gemara, acronyms and abbreviations, who is making what statement and about what, and knowing enough Aramaic vocabulary. Someone can even feel like a child, while his actual goal is to pick up any sefer and understand it on his own.

For others, despite being intelligent, disciplined, and motivated, it still doesn't become clear. Often, it's not effort — it's insufficient understanding of the flow of the sugya itself.

The pace of the regular Gemara shiurim is usually too fast so one falls behind. They also often assume that the talmid knows the basics of how Gemara works.

Finally, someone may have a good Aramaic vocabulary and even follow the flow of the Gemara, but he may have never really "got" the Gemara - the big picture of what it is trying to do. It is often someone who's a working professional and yet never felt like he understood the Gemara properly.

After teaching talmidim from all around the world for over twenty years, Rabbi Dovid Raskas, a maggid shiur renowned for his crystal-clear teaching style, realized there is a serious need for a program that would help such learners overcome these challenges and connect to Gemara on their own. The result is the Bficha Uvilvovcha Program which enables one to develop high level Aramaic vocabulary, the ability to go through the shakla v'taria on one's own and see the big picture - all of which creates the experience of depth and enjoyment of learning Gemara. To fit into a busy schedule of a working individuals, the program consists of pre-recorded video shiurim that one learns at his own pace with full email and phone support.

The Bficha Uvilvovcha Program has already helped people from many backgrounds - gain the confidence to open a Gemara and learn it inside - with a number of talmidim making a siyum on their first mesechta without needing a sefer with an English translation and explanation. Enrollment is now underway to join a group of talmidim learning in the program. For more information, tuition, and application, visit www.bficha-uvilvovcha.com/ft or send an email to: support@bficha-uvilvovcha.com

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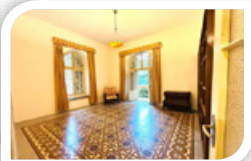
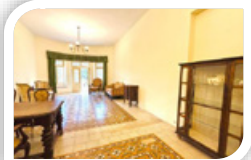
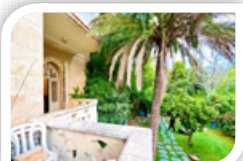
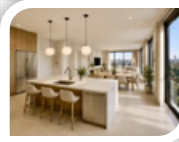
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Policy and Kosher Certification

To understand how kosher certification functions, one must first appreciate the complexities involved in granting kosher certification. Every professional kosher certification program is built upon three fundamental components:

- **Raw Ingredients:** A certifying agency must know every ingredient used in the product, determine its kosher status, and ensure that only approved ingredients are utilized.
- **Production Process:** The production process must be carefully evaluated. Is the product manufactured through a hot or cold process? Are dairy and pareve products produced on the same production line? Does the product undergo additional processing outside the certified

facility? Each of these factors can significantly affect the product's kosher status.

- **Supervision:** The certifying agency must determine the appropriate level of supervision required. Certain products demand continuous, full-time supervision because of the high potential for error or substitution. Others require only periodic inspections, depending on the facility, production process, and overall reliability of the kosher program.

Every kosher certification agency evaluates a facility based on these three pillars. Once these elements are properly integrated, a product can generally be certified. However, there is a fourth element that supersedes them all: **halachic policy**.

An essential aspect of Jewish life is reliance upon established halachic standards. Throughout every generation, we have looked to our rabbinic leaders to apply the eternal principles of the Torah to the realities of contemporary life. Kashrut is no exception. Modern kosher certification depends heavily upon advances in technology, chemistry, engineering, food science, and manufacturing. Professional kosher organizations invest significant resources to remain current in these fields, and as technology evolves, new halachic questions continually arise that require careful analysis and authoritative rulings.

OU Kosher embraces all of these principles. In addition, an international certification agency must also establish clear and consistent policy. The OU certifies more than 1.5 million products in over 100 countries. It is

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difficult to find a Jewish community anywhere in the world that does not consume OU-certified products. Maintaining such a global certification program requires uniform policies that preserve both halachic integrity and professional consistency.

For example, the OU requires unannounced inspections of all certified facilities, regardless of the company's reputation or reliability. This policy reinforces the halachic principle of *mir-tat*—the understanding that a manufacturer remains aware that inspectors may arrive at any time and is therefore deterred from making unauthorized changes.

Another example is the OU's policy regarding *bitul* (nullification). Although certain situations may be halachically permissible after the fact (*b'dieved*), the OU does not establish certification programs that rely upon such circumstances. The organization's philosophy is that kosher certification should reflect the highest practical halachic standard. When a certification agency places its symbol on a product, it is effectively recommending that product to the kosher consumer.

Several weeks ago, a well-known rabbi published a series of articles discussing kosher certification in Israel. The articles were thoughtful and informative, and it is evident that the author is genuinely concerned with providing reliable kosher certification to the broader Israeli public. His central question was what level of certification should be offered as the national standard—one that reflects uncompromising halachic integrity without adopting unnecessary stringencies.

This objective closely mirrors the philosophy of the OU. Our goal is to provide **kashrut l'chatchilah**—an ideal standard of kosher certification that is firmly grounded in accepted halachic principles while making as many products as reasonably possible available to the public.

The author cited two examples where he argued that the Israeli Chief Rabbinate has adopted unnecessarily stringent policies that ultimately disadvantage consumers seeking a basic kosher standard.

The first concerns the certification of non-*Chalav Yisrael* liquid milk. For more than fifty years, the Chief Rabbinate has approved products containing non-*Chalav Yisrael* milk powder, but does not approve products made with non-*Chalav Yisrael* liquid milk. As a practical consequence, many recognized kosher products, such as Philadelphia Cream Cheese and Häagen-Dazs ice cream, cannot be sold as kosher under the Chief Rabbinate's certification in Israel.

The second example concerns the production of non-*mevushal* wine. The author argued that wineries owned and operated

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by non-observant Jews should be eligible for kosher certification and that non-*Shomer Shabbat* Jews should be permitted to handle non-*mevushal* wine. While there are respected halachic authorities who have adopted more lenient positions on this issue, the traditional requirement has been that non-*mevushal* wine be handled only by Jews who observe Shabbat.

It seems these two cases are not comparable.

The question of non-*Chalav Yisrael* liquid milk is primarily one of certification policy. Although significant halachic discussion exists, kosher agencies throughout the world have developed sophisticated systems to certify both liquid milk and milk powder. These systems incorporate ingredient verification, government oversight, facility inspections, and carefully structured supervision programs.

The issue of non-*mevushal* wine, however, is fundamentally different. Wine production demands an extraordinary level of oversight and precision. Around the world, kosher wineries require extensive preparation, close cooperation with producers, and highly dedicated supervision throughout production.

Even according to authorities who permit non-observant Jews to handle wine under certain circumstances, numerous practical questions remain. What level of supervision would be required? Would this ruling apply equally

to all non-observant Jews, including those who openly reject fundamental principles of Judaism? How can a certifying agency ensure that no prohibited activity occurs on Shabbat? How can it guarantee that non-Jews do not handle the wine in a manner prohibited by halacha?

These are not merely theoretical questions; they are central to establishing a reliable and professionally administered kosher certification program.

For this reason, the longstanding policy requiring only *Shomer Shabbat* Jews to handle non-*mevushal* wine remains an essential component of professional kosher certification. It is a policy that provides clarity, consistency, and confidence for both certifying agencies and consumers, and it has therefore become the accepted standard throughout much of the kosher certification world.

Kosher certification organizations bear an enormous responsibility to the kosher consumer. Their obligation is not simply to determine whether an isolated product may be technically permissible, but to establish clear, consistent policies rooted in sound halachic principles that can be responsibly applied across the countless situations encountered in modern food production.

When certification agencies maintain these standards, consumers can purchase products with confidence, knowing that the kosher symbol represents not only technical compliance with halacha but also a carefully considered system of professional oversight, consistent policy, and unwavering commitment to the highest standards of kashrut. ■

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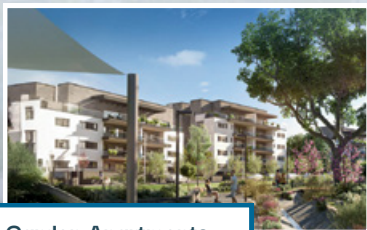
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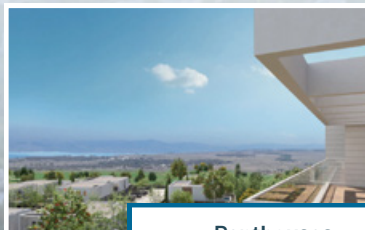
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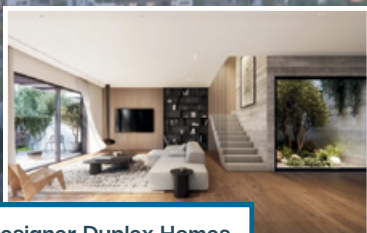
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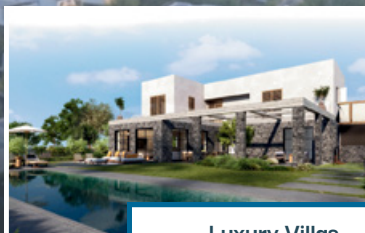
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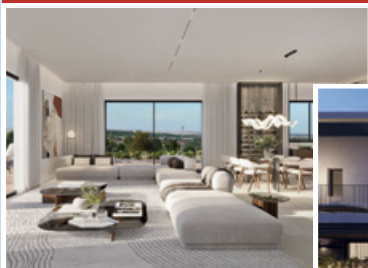
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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

This *Shabbat* is known as *Shabbat Chazon*—the *Shabbat* of Vision. Most associate that this *Shabbat* is called *Shabbat Chazon* because of the *Haftara* we recite from the first chapter of *Sefer Yeshayahu*, of *Yeshayahu's* Vision of the *Churban* of *Yerushalayim*. However, these days leading up to *Tisha B'Av* are not simply a time for us to reflect on the past, and the pain and loss of the *Batei HaMikdash*, and the subsequent lengthy exile of the Jewish people, but also an opportunity for us to begin to perceive and envision a better tomorrow.

The Aish Kodesh, the Rebbe Piaseczna zy'a, suggests that though we associate the message of this *Haftara* to be *Yeshayahu's* vision of the *churban*, giving us perspective and context to enable us to reflect on the tragic events that led to our exile, the *Haftara* concludes with the verse: *Tzion B'Mishpat Tipadeh, V'Shaveha BiTzdaka-Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and those that return to her with righteousness...* The Rebbe, as he does in so many of his powerful teachings, is reminding us that even when the Jewish people are besieged with pain and suffering, we must hold steadfast to the belief that *Yishuat Hashem K'Heref Ayin*—that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, can bring salvation with the blink of an eye! Even when our circumstances seem bleak, and it is beyond our capability to perceive from our limited human perspective how it might be possible, **a Jew must always believe that indeed *Yishuat Hashem K'Heref Ayin*.**

The Kedushat Levi, Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zy'a, suggested another slightly

different interpretation of the significance of this *Shabbat Chazon*, this *Shabbat* of vision. On this *Shabbat*, explained *Reb Levi Yitzchak*, each and every one of us is shown a vision of the third *Beit HaMikdash*.

The ***Lubavitcher Rebbe zy'a***, further explains that the revelation of *Shabbat Chazon* is of such intensity that although the *Beit HaMikdash* is shown “from a distance,” to the extent that there are some who do not see it at all, nevertheless, this revelation is so powerful, that it becomes internalized within every single Jew. *Hashem* allows our souls a glimpse of a world of complete peace, a world which is empowered through the knowledge and awareness of the Divine presence, a world that has begun to see and actualize our innate potential for greatness and *kedusha*.

Our *Chazal* teach us in *Masechet Shabbat*, that one of the fundamental questions which each of us will be asked after 120 years, when they leave this world, is *tzipita liyishua*—Did you anticipate and long for redemption.

The Netivot Shalom, the Admor of Slonim zy'a, explains that there is a fundamental difference with the simple belief in the concept of redemption and anticipating that redemption. Anticipating redemption is one of the fundamental tenets of Jewish life, not simply to believe intellectually or conceptually in the idea of redemption, but to believe that that redemption, that better tomorrow for the entire world is indeed within our reach. The true question explains the Rebbe, is how much do we really want that redemption? Have we demonstrated

strongly enough that we believe it is within our sight and reach? Are we empowered to do everything we are personally capable of to contribute to making the world a better, safer, morally sound place?

Yehi Ratzon, as we read the prophetic words of *Yeshayahu* on this *Shabbat Chazon*, may we indeed be moved to recall all the tragic events that led to our exile, and as we also reflect upon the many painful and frightening experiences of these past many months, may we simultaneously be inspired to envision the *Beit HaMikdash*, and everything it represents, and may we merit to do everything in our capability to move the world closer to that brighter tomorrow that we continue to long for. In essence, may we be blessed with the capacity to envision and experience a world of peace, unity, and concern for one another. ■

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"Vayomer Hashem eilay al tatzar et Moav ve'al titgar bam milchamah ki lo etein lecha mei'artzo yerushah ki le'vnei Lot natati et Ar yerushah—And Hashem said to me, Do not distress the Moabites, and do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land [as] an inheritance, because I have given Ar to the children of Lot [as] an inheritance.(Devarim 2:9)

Rashi *zt"l* points out the difference between the instructions given to *Am Yisrael* regarding provocation towards the Moabites vs. the Amonites. *Am Yisrael* was restricted from provoking Moav in battle, as opposed to the Amonites, against whom they were restricted from any kind of harassment. **"As a reward for the modesty shown by**

their ancestress [Lot's younger daughter], who did not publicize her father's conduct, as did his elder daughter, who named her son Moab, [like "mei'av," from the father] (Baba Kamma 38b)."

What lesson can we take from this observation?

Rav Chaim Volozhiner *zt"l* in *Nefesh Hachaim* shares a powerful insight on the verse, *"Umagid le'adam mah seicho—*and declares to man what his speech is."*(Amos 4:13)* Rashi teaches us that it means that all man's deeds are related in detail to him at the time of his death. Rav Chaim adds an additional dimension; not only will man be shown his deeds (and speech in his lifetime), but he will also be shown **the implications** of what he did and said.



Baal HaTanya *zt"l*

So often we are not even aware of the impact of our words, and we say things as a casual comment or remark. After one leaves this world, Hashem shows each person the effects and repercussions of his words both in a positive sense and otherwise. Thus, we can understand how we use the phrase *"yirat shamayim"* as opposed to saying one has *"yirat Hashem."* The implication being that one's fear of what he will see in heaven after he dies should influence his action and speech in his lifetime. The indiscretion of Lot's daughter determined the fate of her descendants hundreds of years later, when the Jewish people

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encountered them as they approached the Land of Israel.

The *Ba'al HaTanya zy"ra* illustrates this very idea in his commentary on Lecha Dodi. We say “*shamor v'zachor b'dibur echad*,” in every *dibur*, in every word one says, he must be *shamor v'zachor*, he must be careful and remember that “*Hashem echad*,” he must express the Oneness of Hashem. We must weigh each of our words and decide on the most appropriate and refined language and phraseology.

Our gift of speech is one of the most valuable mediums that we can use to combat *sinat chinam*, baseless hatred. Both in the written form, as well as in oral communication, one's words can bridge gaps and create multiple opportunities for connection.

Let us use our speech to promote positivity and kinship, bringing all of our people together in unity and brotherhood. ■

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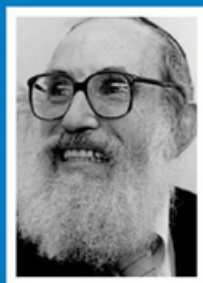
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Three Circles of Mourning

There are several concentric circles of mourning on Tisha B'Av. At the center stands the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash. This is the most immediate and historical focus of the day. We mourn the loss of the Beit Hamikdash, our exile from the land promised to us by Hashem, and the collapse of Jewish sovereignty.

Tisha B'Av asks us to relive that infamous day. Various kinot transport us back to the two churbanot. The kinah *Eich Tenachem* describes Nevuzaradan's entry into the First Beit Hamikdash and recounts his massacre of tens of thousands in response to the murder of the navi Zechariah. Likewise, the kinah entitled *Az Bahaloch Yirmiyahu* portrays Yirmiyahu entering the Beit Hamikdash on the night of Tisha B'Av and lamenting its destruction.

Other kinot focus on the Roman destruction of the Second Beit Hamikdash. *Arzei*

HaLevanon memorializes the Ten Martyrs, while *Eleh Ezkerah* recounts the tragic fate of the son and daughter of Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol after they were taken captive by the Romans.

Our first circle of mourning on Tisha B'Av is the actual destruction of the two Batei Mikdash.

The second circle of mourning extends beyond the day of the Churban itself to the centuries of suffering that flowed directly from the destruction of the Mikdash. Two thousand years of galut were marked by hatred, persecution, expulsions, and massacre. Some of these tragedies became the subject of kinot, such as the devastation of the Rhineland communities during the Crusades in 1096. Since the Holocaust stands apart in both scale and horror, many communities have added kinot to commemorate that unprecedented catastrophe. Other tragedies, including the Spanish Inquisition and the Chmielnicki massacres, did not receive their own kinot, yet they are fully embraced within the mourning of Tisha B'Av. They are all chapters of the same long story that began with the destruction of the Mikdash and continued throughout the long night of exile.

There is a third and widest circle of mourning on Tisha B'Av. We mourn not only the Churban itself, nor only the centuries of Jewish suffering that followed. We mourn what happened to our world in the wake of Tisha B'Av.

The Beit Hamikdash was more than the national home of the Jewish people or the

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place in which Jews encountered Hashem. It was the place from which the Shechinah radiated to the entire world. When the Mikdash stood, Hashem's presence was more openly revealed, illuminating not only Jewish life but the moral and spiritual condition of humanity. With its destruction, that presence did not disappear, but it became concealed. The hester panim that followed reshaped not only Jewish history but the condition of the world itself.

Therefore, on Tisha B'Av we mourn not only a destroyed Mikdash or a long exile. We mourn a fractured world that no longer enjoys the same clarity, morality, and awareness of Hashem's presence. Many of the moral and spiritual struggles that define modern life can also be traced to that loss. To understand why the concealment of the Shechinah had such sweeping consequences, we must first understand what monotheism was always meant to accomplish.

TWO GOALS

The goals of monotheism are manifold. Its first goal is theological: to deepen belief in Hashem and strengthen awareness of His presence in the world. But monotheism also carries a profound moral mission. It seeks to embed Hashem's values and attributes within human society. Hashem is compassionate, just, and kind, and His will is inherently moral. As people live by those values, His presence is felt not only in prayer and ceremonies but in the daily conduct of human beings.

The Shechinah is revealed not only when people acknowledge Hashem, but when they emulate Him. Every act of compassion, honesty, justice, and responsibility brings His presence more deeply into the world. When humanity lives by those standards, the world

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becomes a place in which the Shechinah is more readily felt.

For centuries, these moral commitments formed the foundation of civilization. Marriage and family were regarded as sacred institutions, while morality itself was understood to rest upon enduring truths. It was commonly accepted that standards of right and wrong transcended the individual. These moral norms were rooted in a higher order established by Hashem rather than in human choice.

Over the past few centuries, with the rise of hyper-individualism, that shared moral framework has steadily weakened. Modern society has elevated personal freedom, liberty, and dignity. Increasingly, it has detached those ideals from any objective moral foundation. In an age of individualism, people increasingly claim not only the freedom to choose how to live but also the authority to define what is morally right and wrong. Objective moral truth has faded, and so has confidence in objective ethical standards.

The hester panim that followed the destruction of the Mikdash gradually weakened the foundation upon which those moral absolutes rested. The Churban ultimately led to a world in which, centuries later, morality itself is increasingly viewed as a matter of personal preference rather than shared truth.

THE LOSS OF TRUTH

The erosion extends beyond morality to how we view truth itself. We inhabit a world in which truth has become fragile. It is undermined by the technologies that increasingly shape our lives. Social media has made it far easier for falsehood to spread unchecked, while artificial intelligence can now fabricate images, videos, and voices that are nearly impossible to distinguish from reality. As these technologies continue to advance, discerning truth will become even more difficult.

Hashem is the ultimate source of truth, and every genuine pursuit of truth draws us closer to Him. When His presence is concealed, truth itself becomes untethered. A world detached from the Shechinah gradually loses confidence not only in what is right but in what is true.

Both the erosion of objective morality and the distortion of truth have also found expression in growing hostility toward the Jewish people and the Jewish state. The Jewish people bear witness to Hashem in this world. Societies that lose confidence in transcendent truth often become uncomfortable with those who continue to bear that witness.

Our return to Eretz Yisrael marks the gradual restoration of Hashem's presence to history and the gradual emergence of Malchut Shamayim. It is therefore no coincidence that Israel has become the focal point of so much moral inversion and falsehood.

IDEOLOGICAL CONFUSION

The concealment of the Shechinah after Tisha B'Av produced a second consequence. Our own generation struggles with growing ideological confusion and division. This too flows from the *hester panim* that followed the destruction of the Mikdash.

When Hashem's presence is more openly revealed, spiritual reality is clearer. Throughout much of Jewish history, profound debates flourished, yet they unfolded within a framework of shared spiritual truths. Greater revelation did not eliminate disagreement, but it established the boundaries within which disagreement could legitimately occur.

A world illuminated by the Shechinah and guided by *ru'ach hakodesh* possesses greater clarity and greater confidence. *Ru'ach hakodesh* does not erase free will or eliminate differences of opinion. It does, however, illuminate the path toward truth and disqualify ideas that lie beyond the boundaries of authentic Torah.

Our post-Tisha B'Av world is different. Without the same revelation of the Shechinah, competing ideologies multiply, each claiming to possess the truth. We no longer enjoy the same spiritual clarity that once guided our people. We continue searching for truth, but we do so in a world where the light that once illuminated humanity shines less brightly.

MOURNING OUR FRACTURED WORLD

As we approach yet another Tisha B'Av, let us remember to mourn in three concentric circles. First, we mourn the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash, our exile from Eretz Yisrael, and the loss of Jewish sovereignty. Second, we mourn the long night of Jewish history, centuries of persecution and suffering that flowed from the Churban and from which, thankfully, we are slowly beginning to emerge.

Finally, we mourn the world itself. We see the erosion of shared moral values, growing confusion between truth and falsehood, and a society that has become increasingly fractured. We should not be surprised that our

enemies exploit these fractures in their campaign against the Jewish people and the Jewish state. A world that has lost its moral and spiritual center becomes increasingly vulnerable to moral inversion and distorted truth.

We also mourn the ideological confusion within our own people. Bereft of the same revelation of the Shechinah, we struggle to preserve the shared spiritual clarity that once united us. We continue searching for truth, but we do so in a world in which competing ideologies have multiplied and certainty has become harder to attain.

When the Shechinah became concealed, the world lost more than the Beit Hamikdash. It lost much of the moral and spiritual clarity that flowed from Hashem's revealed presence. The fractures we experience today are not disconnected from that ancient loss.

We pray for the day when the Shechinah will once again rest openly in our world, restoring the moral and spiritual clarity that has been missing since the Churban. ■



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Modeh Ani Part II: A Second Chance Every Morning

Karen could hardly believe her luck. She had just been offered the opportunity of a lifetime: to house-sit a magnificent mansion. She would live there rent-free, and all she had to do was keep the house clean and in good condition. If she took proper care of it, she would be generously rewarded. But if the house was damaged through her negligence, she would be held responsible. At first, Karen was extremely careful. She tiptoed through the house, making sure everything stayed spotless. But as the weeks turned into months, she became comfortable, and then careless. Little by little, she stopped cleaning up after herself. Clutter accumulated, garbage piled up, and before long the once-beautiful mansion looked neglected and run-down. One day, the owners informed her that they needed the house for the weekend. Karen, having long forgotten

that the mansion wasn't really hers, simply packed up and left without making any effort to clean it.

Imagine the owners' reaction. They opened the door to find their beautiful home in shambles. Surely, they would never let Karen return. Surely, they would charge her for the damage she had caused. But that's not what happened. When Karen returned after the weekend, she was stunned. The mansion was immaculate. Every room sparkled. Everything had been repaired and restored. Sitting on the kitchen counter was a simple note: "Karen, here's a second chance. We know you can do it."

It sounds like an impossible ending. Yet, in many ways, it is the story of every single morning of our lives. The Chatam Sofer explains that Hashem has entrusted each of us with something infinitely more precious than a mansion- our neshama. If we care for it properly, we will receive immeasurable reward in the World to Come. If we damage it, we will ultimately be held accountable.

Every night, we temporarily return our neshamot to Hashem. If we truly stopped to think about it, we should feel embarrassed. Hashem sees exactly how we have treated the holy Neshama that He entrusted to us. He could justifiably say, "This is how you cared



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for My precious gift? Clearly you are not taking proper care of it. Why should I return it to you?"

Yet He doesn't. Instead, He lovingly cleans our neshamot. He removes the weariness, the stress, and the spiritual exhaustion that have accumulated throughout the day. He fills us with fresh kochot, renewed energy, and another opportunity to become who we were meant to be. Every morning, He sends us the same message: "Here's a second chance. I know you can do it."

The Midrash Tehillim beautifully describes this process: נפשו יגעה עליו ושחוקה — by the end of the day, a person's neshama is weary and worn out. But when Hashem returns it the next morning, it is like a בריה חדשה—an entirely new creation.

With this background, we can better appreciate the second half of Modeh Ani.

That You returned my soul to me. - שהחזרת בי נשמתי - Considering the condition in which I returned it, the fact that You gave it back to me at all is astounding.

Why do we use the word חמלה here? Why not use the words ברחס or ברחס? The Vilna Gaon explains that the word חמלה is specifically used when there was legitimate reason for anger. Hashem had every reason to be upset after seeing the condition of our neshamot. Yet instead of responding with anger, He responds with compassion.

The Mishnah Berura notes

that one should be careful to pause between the words רבה and בחמלה. The word רבה (great) is not describing Hashem's חמלה. Rather, it introduces the next phrase:

Great is your faith. But whose faith is being described? It's a bit ambiguous.

The Netziv understands these words as referring to our faith in Hashem. Each morning, Hashem determines the events that will unfold throughout the world that day. We begin the day by expressing our trust that whatever He decrees is ultimately for the good. The Netziv therefore writes that the morning is an especially significant time for Tefillah. As the day's events are being determined, we should pause to daven that Hashem guide everything that will take place that day, both in our personal lives

שהחזרת בי נשמתי בחמלה

Every night, we temporarily return our neshamot to Hashem. If we truly stopped to think about it, we should feel embarrassed. Hashem sees exactly how we have treated the holy Neshama He entrusted to us. He could justifiably say, "This is how you cared for My precious gift? Clearly you are not taking proper care of it. Why should I return it to you?"

Yet He doesn't. Instead, He lovingly cleans our neshamot. He removes the weariness, the stress, and the spiritual exhaustion that have accumulated throughout the day. He fills us with fresh kochot, renewed energy, and another opportunity to become who we were meant to be.



Every morning, He sends us the same beautiful message: "Here's a second chance. I know you can do it."

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and throughout the world, in the best way possible.

The Chatam Sofer, however, offers a completely different interpretation. He explains that אמונתך refers to Hashem's faith in us. Every morning we proclaim: "How great is Your belief in me!" After everything You saw yesterday, You still returned my neshama. You still believe that I can become better. Every single morning, You renew Your confidence in me and give me another opportunity to succeed. What a powerful way to begin the day. No matter what happened yesterday, no matter how many mistakes I made or how far I may have strayed, I wake up knowing that Hashem still believes in me. He is rooting for me, supporting me, and giving me another chance. With that realization, I can get out of bed with confidence and face a brand-new day.

Perhaps this is also one of the greatest lessons we can learn as parents, teachers, spouses, and friends. Sometimes the greatest gift we can give another person is not advice or criticism, but our belief in them. When someone knows that we truly believe in their potential, it gives them the strength and confidence to believe in themselves and to keep moving forward. ■



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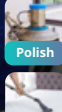
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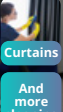
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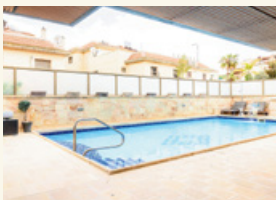
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Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot (3:1): Contemplating God's Judgment: A Last Resort

"Look at three things and you will not fall into the hands of sin. Know where you came from...from a fetid drop ...Where are you going? To a place of dirt, worms and maggots. And before Whom will you have to give a judgment and reckoning? Before the King, King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He." (Pirkei Avot 3:1)

The underlying theme of the Mishnah emphasizes uprooting pride. When contemplating our less-than-honorable beginnings, we are humbled. When we visualize our end, we vividly bring to mind how our body will lie lifeless, how we will be lowered into the grave, and how our bodies will decompose. Additionally, when we envision that we are ultimately forced to make a reckoning for our sins and are judged for our misdeeds, we will

be more apt to mend our ways.

Rav Chaim Volozhin added a powerful insight based on the language in the Mishnah: Giving "judgment" and "a reckoning" refers to two types of transgressions for which one will be punished: "Judgment" refers to the punishment a person will suffer for the evil he has committed. And "reckoning" takes into account the good deeds he could have performed at those same moments, yet refrained from doing so. (Ruach Chaim 3:1)

CURTAILING DEPRESSING THOUGHTS

The Talmud (Berachot 40a) teaches: "One who is used to eating lentils once in thirty days prevents *askara* (a painful, lethal death). However, he should not eat lentils every day because it causes bad breath."

Although this talmudic teaching seems to be offering good advice regarding one's eating habits, Rav Kook was convinced that, more importantly, there is sound spiritual advice to be garnered from these guidelines. Lentils are the traditional food eaten by mourners. The notion of eating lentils once a month symbolizes the idea that there is benefit to periodically reminding oneself of the fact that death is part of life. Fear of a heavenly judgment day can also be a healthy thing, as it dampens one's spirit in a manner that helps to distance

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oneself from haughtiness.

However, one should use this potent tool of self-reproof only periodically. On a daily basis, one should opt for the higher tier of positive self-encouragement, based on love of Hashem and joyful observance of the mitzvot. Employing the harsher tactic of conjuring up in one's mind fear of punishment will inevitably cause sadness. The "bad breath" mentioned in the above passage is a metaphor for a dampening of one's *ruach* (spirit), similar to the word *re'ach* (breath), with thoughts of death and punishment, which is never the ideal pathway for a person to pursue. (Ain Aya, Berachot, vol. 2, piska #30, p. 182)

ONLY AS A LAST RESORT

Rav Kook underlines in a number of his teachings that one should be extremely wary about contemplating the day of death as a method to fend off sin. A path of positivity and joyful Jewish engagement is always preferred. He sees this vital message relayed in the following Talmudic passage:

"A person should always agitate the yetzer hatov (good inclination) against the yetzer hara (evil inclination)...if this is ineffective [in fending off the yetzer hara], he should occupy himself with Torah study...if this is effective, he should recite Kriat Shema...if this is ineffective, he should remind himself of the day of death." (Berachot 5a).

Rav Kook understood this passage to be teaching that the method of conjuring images of the day of death in order to comply with the commandments is to be utilized only as a last resort.

First and foremost, this passage advises that

one saturates one's time with positive and uplifting activities that will inevitably subdue the destructive allures and forces of the *yetzer hara*. The key is to beat the *yetzer hara* to the punch, so to speak, with positive acts of goodness, thus allowing little space for anything but positivity to permeate one's day-to-day life.

However, says the Talmud, if the positive actions are not sufficiently effective, one should incorporate additional Torah study, especially *mussar*, to assist in this endeavor. And if this still proves ineffective, expanding one's inspirational engagements through reciting the Shema or similar emotionally charged rituals should be employed to help bolster one's resolve.

Rav Kook, in his uplifting reading of this classic talmudic passage, underscores that contemplating the day of death as a means of warding off the yetzer hara should only be employed when all other motivating and positive options have proven ineffective, "...for when a person's power of the soul is weakened there is always going to be a loss of good things as well." (Ain Aya, Berachot, vol. 1, chapter 1, piska #24, p. 13)

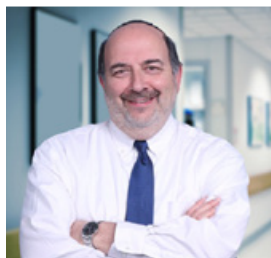
THE MESSAGE ON HIS HEADSTONE

Visiting a cemetery is generally a morose



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and mournful experience. Standing in a place of burial, one feels melancholy when recognizing the limited time a person has on this earth.

Rav Aryeh Levin, the celebrated student and dear friend of Rav Kook, who was well aware that people often experience depressing thoughts and feelings when visiting a cemetery, requested that the following words be etched into his headstone in order to offer solace: "I ask all those who visit my grave to declare wholeheartedly, "I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator..." [a quotation from the last of the Rambam's Thirteen Principles of Faith]. (A Tzaddik for Eternity, Raz, p. 231)

Even in a place of mortality, which could instill feelings of the vulnerability of life and the judgment we will be forced to withstand in the Heavenly Court, Rav Aryeh wished to shift one's focus to a more elevated and hopeful plateau. The Tzaddik of Yerushalayim wished to spotlight a pathway that accentuates the fact that every Jew is destined to live again in a Messianic world that is tranquil and fully serene.

The famed Rebbe of Gur, Rebbe Menachem Alter (known as the Penei Menachem, 1926–1996), a scion of the Gur dynasty, was fond of telling the following story about a woman whose son, serving in the I.D.F. (Israeli Defense Force), was killed in battle in the Shalom HaGalil campaign. Once she heard the dreadful news, she lost her will to live and sank into a black pit of depression. She no longer attended weddings and other social functions and immured herself in her silent home.

On one rare occasion, she did leave to attend the funeral of an old friend at the

Sanhedria Cemetery. Having arrived there early, she was advised by a companion to visit the grave of Rav Aryeh Levin and recite a few verses of Tehillim. The merit of that great Tzaddik might perhaps cure her deadening melancholy.

Having reached the Tzaddik of Jerusalem's grave, the bereaved woman glanced at the tombstone, and suddenly the words engraved on it seemed to leap straight to her. They read as follows: "I ask all those who visit my grave to declare wholeheartedly, "I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator..."

The woman was stunned; a ray of hope shone through the cobwebs of her broken heart. "The dead will be restored to life!" she whispered to herself. "I will see my only son once again."

From that moment onward, a remarkable change occurred, and this broken-hearted mother regained her strength and vitality. This woman began to take part in daily life and regained her will to live, believe, and hope.

This is how the great Tzaddik, Rav Aryeh Levin, was able to comfort the bereaved, even after he himself was no longer alive. (A Tzaddik for Eternity, Raz, pp. 230–232) ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Sitting on the Floor on Tisha B'Av

Question: A major challenge for me on Tisha B'av is sitting very low. My back is chronically sensitive to this, but I have never experienced longer-term repercussions. I usually stand quite a bit during the long *Kinnot* I take part in. Would it be better to sit on a slightly low chair (I have been lazy about getting one)? What do I do if *Kinnot* finishes after *chazot*, as I see some but not all people sitting normally then?

Answer: The *gemara* (Ta'anit 30a) says that all *mitzvot* of *aveilut* during *shiva* apply to us all on Tisha B'av. As we know (although the sources on this are complicated – see Beit Yosef, Yoreh Deah 387), an *avel* does not sit on a regular chair, and therefore the same should be true on Tisha B'av. However, when the Shulchan Aruch and Rama (Orach Chayim 559:3) codify this practice for Tisha B'av, they say that it is only for part of the day.

Some explain that the time limitation stems from the fact that sitting low on Tisha B'av is apparently a *chumra*, as there are no explicit Talmudic sources about sitting low, and so we are lenient (see Mishbetzot Zahav 559:4). The Taz (OC 559:4) says that it is a full-fledged *halacha*, but that the *gemara*, by presenting a broad rule that equates between *shiva* and Tisha B'av but leaves sitting low off the list of examples, hints at a compromise regarding its duration.

The Bach (OC 559) argues that one's sitting on Tisha B'av should not be derived from *aveilut* because the comparison is only for negative commandments. The Taz (ibid.) responds that sitting low is indeed a negative commandment (not to sit regularly), not a positive one (to sit low). He therefore posits that standing is fine, because only improper sitting is forbidden. According to him, standing or lying down is neutral. Even if there is a positive *mitzva* to sit low, it is hard to imagine one being required to remain seated the whole time. Rather, there should be a significant amount of sitting low, and the whole time this applies, it is forbidden to sit normally.

There is a lack of clarity as to how low this should be. *Rishonim*, including the Ramban (Torat Ha'adam, Aveilut 63) and the Tur (OC 559) speak of sitting on the ground, and this has a basis in the *gemara* and even *Tanach* (see Iyov 2:13). However, it is permitted (and perhaps preferred – see Nitei Gavriel, Bein Hametzarim 2) to put something between him and the ground (Mishna Berura 559:11). When it is difficult to sit that low, one can sit on a low chair/bench (ibid.). While many

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assume the cutoff point is three *tefachim*, others say it is enough that it is noticeably lower than normal (see opinions in Dirshu 559:13). Certainly, whatever is acceptable during *shiva* is permitted on Tisha B'av.

Regarding your discomfort, on the one hand, the practice is supposed to make it uncomfortable. On the other hand, it is not intended to cause someone qualitatively more pain than the average person. If a low chair will work for you, it behooves you to obtain one, and if you decide not to bother and it is not damaging to you, it was your decision to handle the discomfort and/or stand part of the time. Since even by *aveilut* it is accepted that those for whom it is truly difficult may sit on a normal chair (Aruch Hashulchan, YD 387:3), if it becomes truly difficult you may sit as you need to. In summary, the order would be: using a low chair, certainly if it is less than three *tefachim*; standing as much as you need; and finally, sitting on a regular chair when it is **necessary**.

Regarding the timing, while there are sources about staying seated low until finishing *Shacharit/Kinnot* is over (see complex language of the Rama, OC 559:3). Important sources, including the Magen Avraham (559:3) and Pri Megadim (559, MZ 4) mention *chatzot* specifically. Nitei Gavriel (ibid. 68:13) posits that the proper position for *Kinnot* is sitting, even after *chatzot*, but his support for this claim is weak. So, while those who are *machmir* while *Kinnot* continue have a basis, even one who is often *machmir* need not do so if it is difficult. ■

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SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

One White Shoe...and Another

It was 5AM, I had just landed home from another journey in Poland. I was bleary-eyed and exhausted. As I walked through the Arrivals Hall at Ben Gurion, I noticed a woman in front of me. She too had gotten off of a plane that morning and I'm sure she was also very tired. Yet, she was walking with a bounce in her step and wearing a pair of (very) high-heeled, white platform sandals. For a second I thought, "Why would anyone wear such absurdly impractical shoes on an airplane? And, why have them on this early in the morning?"

My mind flashed back to earlier in the week. And another white shoe.

We were in Majdanek and had just entered the barracks that contained the shoes of tens of thousands of Jews who were murdered there and in other death camps during the Holocaust.

When we enter this barracks, there is always an audible groan. Sometimes it takes a few seconds before the group's eyes adjust to the dim lighting and they understand what they are looking at. But there is always a reaction.

This is usually the first time on a journey that we come face to face with the personal belongings that remain from the catastrophe

of the Holocaust. And it is shocking. And visceral. And personal.

Because we all wear shoes.

Shoes are symbolic of a life being lived. A life moving forward. They mold to the shape of the wearer's feet and represent hours of walking, standing, working, and being. Many survivors mention shoes in their testimonies because in the dire conditions of the camps, good shoes meant a greater chance of survival.

But these shoes in Majdanek represent a hard stop. They belonged to the people who didn't walk out, who didn't get to continue moving forward.

In the front of one of the bins sits a lone white shoe. A student points it out and we are all flooded with sadness for what the shoe represents and for what was lost.

Chazal recognized the importance of shoes. They taught that a person should even sell the beams of the roof of their house to have money to buy shoes. In the morning brachot, the blessing, "Blessed are You, King of the Universe, who provides me with all of my needs." "שעשה לי כל צרכי" was intended to be said as we put our shoes on because Chazal recognized that shoes were an integral piece of feeling safe and having the strength to move forward.

Interestingly, we don't make this bracha on Tisha B'Av or Yom Kippur since we are not allowed to wear leather shoes.

On Yom Kippur we are likened to angels who do not need shoes.

But on Tisha B'Av, we are likened to mourners, broken and incomplete without the Beis

HaMikdash, the one place where we could consistently find the presence of the Shechina. We sit on the floor without our shoes and we acknowledge

that without that clarity of connection to Hashem, it is very difficult to keep moving forward. To keep being a person who walks with alacrity towards the next project.

It has been said that a person can live for three weeks without food, three days without water, but not even three minutes without hope.

So, when Tisha B'Av is over, we put our shoes back on and we keep trying to grapple and grope our way forwards towards what Hashem wants from and for us.

Very simply, we grab onto hope and we keep moving forward.

That's what I felt at 5AM at Ben Gurion airport, as my heart linked those white shoes together.

One shoe stuck in Majdanek and the other pair being joyfully, frivolously worn on the feet of a woman who landed that morning in our Eternal Jewish Homeland.

I followed those bouncing white shoes towards the exit and heard my heart sing Am Yisrael Chai. ■

Shoshana Judelman is passionate about learning and growing through Chassidus. She gives shiurim to women in many communities around Israel, including Efrat, Elazar, Raanana and Jerusalem as well as at Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya. Shoshana also guides groups at Yad Vashem and leads journeys to Poland and other countries around Europe for JRoots.

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MRS. SARA ZIMBALIST

**MOTHER OF FALLEN SOLDIER,
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Reflections on Galut During the Three Weeks

I recently completed Sefer Melachim II. Finishing the sefer left me with a profound sense of both sadness and responsibility. As I reflected on the rise and fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Yehudah, I realized that Melachim is not merely a record of our past — it is a mirror that asks us to examine our own lives today.

I learned about the righteous and wicked kings of Israel and Yehudah and read how those who abandoned the ways of Hashem ultimately brought tragedy upon themselves and the nation.

Today, we no longer have the same *ta'avah* (desire) for idol worship, making it even more difficult to understand what drew so many people to it. Yet countless lives were lost because they turned away from Hashem. Learning Nach and watching our galut unfold throughout our history is deeply saddening. We brought this galut upon ourselves. We had a choice. Although some kings returned to the ways of David HaMelech and led the people back to Hashem, others threw it all away, bringing about the destruction of the Beit

HaMikdash and our exile from Eretz Yisrael.

What does galut mean to me during the Three Weeks leading up to Tisha B'Av?

Galut means a lack of connection to Hashem and His Torah. Galut means a lack of unity among Am Yisrael. It can also mean a

lack of closeness within our own

communities and even with-

in our own families. That distance should make us sad. We should feel the pain that we are not doing enough to strengthen our relationship with Hashem and with one another.

The first step in addressing that sadness is recognizing it. We are not yet

where we need to be as Jews. The

fact that Mashiach has not yet come reminds us that our work is not finished.

So how do we improve ourselves? How do we acknowledge what is missing without allowing it to discourage us? How do we draw closer to Hashem?

I can only share the thoughts that come to my mind. We do not know Hashem's plans, but we do know the Torah He gave each and every one of us. We know the mitzvot He asks us to keep.



Perhaps the challenge is not that we don't know enough, but that we need to relearn what we think we already know. Sometimes reviewing familiar material, or learning it through a different lens, can open our eyes to new perspectives that deepen our connection to Hashem and to our nation.

Perhaps our commitment to learning — our desire to keep growing in Torah — is one of the messages of the Three Weeks. Maybe this is the perfect time to begin learning a new sefer or to return to one we haven't opened in years. While living in galut, we must look toward the future while learning from our past. History has a way of repeating itself if we fail to learn its lessons.

Although we no longer worship idols, we may still allow other distractions to pull us away from what truly matters. Perhaps spending less time on our phones would allow us to "find the time" to open a sefer, attend a shiur, or simply spend more meaningful time with family.

In this past Shabbat's special Haftarah, one of the Haftarot of the Three Weeks, we read words filled with sorrow and mourning. Yet they also contain hope — the hope that through teshuvah we can grow from our past mistakes.

So too, we can repair what is lacking through greater Torah learning and acts of chesed. Bikur cholim, hachnasat orchim, preparing meals for those in need, visiting the elderly, and simply calling a friend are all opportunities to strengthen the bonds between us.

Every day is a gift from Hashem. Time is one of Hashem's greatest gifts, and how we choose to use it says so much about who we are and who we aspire to become. Using it wisely should be one of our greatest priorities.

Our son, Eli Moshe ד"ה, understood how precious time was. He did his best to make every minute count. His example reminds us that each day is an opportunity to grow in Torah, mitzvot, and chesed—opportunities that should never be taken for granted.

The Three Weeks arrive just before Elul, giving us the opportunity to begin our process of teshuvah even before the month of mercy begins. We should always be working on ourselves. During the summer our routines often become more relaxed, and sometimes our spiritual routines do as well. While taking a break is healthy, we should never take a break from Torah and mitzvot.

Perhaps the Three Weeks, arriving in the middle of summer, remind us to remain on Hashem's path even while on vacation. Vacation where you can daven with a minyan. Keep your tzitzit on, even when it's unbearably hot. Dress with tzniut, even on water hikes. Listen to shiurim while traveling.

Poverty and *tzarot* do not take a summer vacation. Neither should our tzedakah or our chesed.

We may go on vacation, but we should never go on vacation from Hashem.

Every single mitzvah we perform brings us one step closer to the Geulah Sheleimah.

As I finished Sefer Melachim II, I realized that I was not simply reading Jewish history — I was reading the consequences of the choices our people made. That same story did not end with the last chapter of Melachim. It continues with us. Every decision we make, every mitzvah we perform, every act of Torah, tefillah, and chesed becomes another line in the story of Am Yisrael.

The Three Weeks are not meant to leave us in despair. They are meant to awaken us. Mourning is only meaningful when it

inspires growth. May we each use this time to strengthen our connection to Hashem, to His Torah, and to one another. If we do, then we will be writing the next chapter of Jewish history — a chapter that, with Hashem's help, will conclude with the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash and the coming of Mashiach במהרה בימינו, אמן. ■

Sara Zimbalist made Aliyah with her family almost 20 years ago to Bet Shemesh. She volunteers as an EMT in Ichud Hatzala.

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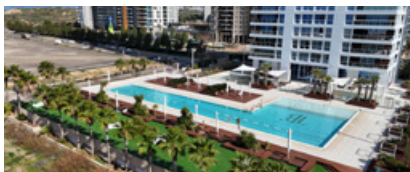
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RABBI ELI OZAROWSKI

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR



Halachot and Customs of Tisha B'Av

Tisha B'Av commemorates the destruction of both the First and Second *Batei HaMikdash*, as well as many other tragedies that befell the Jewish people throughout history. In this review, we will briefly discuss many of the halachot and customs instituted to express our mourning on this day. One should consult a competent halachic authority in cases of uncertainty, and readers are also welcome to contact the author at ozarowsk@gmail.com. May our sincere observance of these halachot hasten the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash* and the coming of the final redemption, speedily in our days.

EREV TISHA B'AV

Torah Study and Other Activities

After *chatzot* (halachic midday), one should avoid pleasure outings or other recreational activities (Rema, O.C. 553:2; *Yalkut Yosef, Moadim*). According to some authorities, one should also refrain from studying Torah after *chatzot* (midday), except for subjects that are permitted on Tisha B'Av itself (Rema, *ibid.*), while others permit regular Torah study until the fast begins (Gra, cited in *Mishna Berura* [M.B.] 552:8; *Chazon Ovadia, Arba Ta'anivot*, p.248).

Seuda Hamafseket

The final meal before the fast, known as the

seuda hamafseket, has special laws intended to create a spirit of mourning (M.B. 552:1). One may not eat meat, drink wine, or eat two cooked foods at this meal (Shulchan Aruch [S.A.] 552:1), though most permit multiple baked foods (*Eishel Avraham* 552:1). A person should refrain from drinking other alcoholic beverages (see M.B. 552:4), and some maintain that soft drinks should also be avoided (*Ohr L'tzion* 3:28:3). Foods cooked together in a single pot are generally considered one cooked dish if they are normally prepared together (S.A. 552:3).

Since it is advisable to eat a substantial meal before fasting, it is customary to divide the afternoon meal into two parts. Some first eat a regular meal, recite *Mincha*, and then eat the *seuda hamafseket*, consisting of bread together with one simple cooked food, such as a hard-boiled egg (S.A. and Rema 552:5, 9). Others first eat the regular meal, recite *Birkat HaMazon*, wait a significant amount of time, and then begin the *seuda hamafseket*. One should make sure not to become too satiated from the first meal, so that the second meal can still be considered a valid meal for the *seuda hamafseket* (see M.B. 552:14, 22). Some recommend, for those who are capable, eating only one meal and adhering to all of the restrictions of the *seuda hamafseket* (Aruch *HaShulchan* 552:11; *Oholei Halacha, Moadim*,

vol.2, p.190).

The *seuda hamafseket* should be eaten while sitting on the floor or on a low stool, rather than in one's regular place at the table. It should ideally be eaten alone rather than together with others, even family members (S.A. 552:7-8). Many have the custom to dip their bread in ashes as a remembrance of the destruction (Rema 552:6).

One should ensure that the *seuda hamafseket* itself is the final significant meal before the fast. Therefore, one should not eat a regular meal and then conclude with only a light snack, as the earlier meal would then improperly become the *seuda hamafseket* (M.B. 552:22).

THE FIVE AFFLICTIONS OF TISHA B'AV

Like Yom Kippur, Tisha B'Av includes five primary prohibitions that begin at sunset.

1. Eating and Drinking

All healthy individuals, as well as pregnant or nursing women without any specific complications, are obligated to fast (S.A. 554:5). Eating and drinking are forbidden throughout the fast, even in very small amounts. Unlike Yom Kippur, however, Tisha B'Av is a rabbinic fast. Therefore, anyone who is bedridden due to illness, even if not in danger (*choleh she'ein bo sakana*) is exempt from fasting (S.A. 554:6; M.B. 554:11). Elderly individuals, pregnant or nursing women experiencing medical complications, and anyone whose health may be adversely affected by fasting may be able to break their fast in the middle if needed, or may be entirely exempt, and should seek halachic and medical guidance before the fast.

Most *poskim* maintain that once a person is permitted to eat on Tisha B'Av, he or she may eat normally (*Piskei Teshuvot* 554:9). However,

one who is generally healthy but must eat a small amount for a specific reason should eat in "*shiurim*," similar to Yom Kippur: Less than 30 cc of solid food every nine minutes and less than a cheekful (calculated at a minimum of 32 cc) of liquid every nine minutes (*Nishmat Avraham* 554:6, citing R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach).

Medication that may be taken without water should generally be swallowed that way. If water is necessary, one should ideally make it bitter. If that is difficult and the medication must be taken on Tisha B'Av itself, it may be taken with a small amount of water when necessary (*ibid.*; *Oholei Halacha*, p.109).

One should not rinse out one's mouth on Tisha B'Av, due to concern that one may come to swallow some of the water. If one feels rinsing out one's mouth is absolutely essential, it is critical to rinse one's mouth, some rule one may be lenient and use mouthwash or toothpaste, making sure to spit it all out afterward (see M.B. 567:11; *Piskei Teshuvot* 567:1; *Minchat Yitzchak* 4:109).

2. Washing

Bathing or washing any part of the body for pleasure is prohibited, even with cold water (S.A. 554:7). However, washing is permitted whenever necessary to remove dirt, though one should wash only the affected area (S.A. 554:9). Therefore, one may wash one's hands after using the restroom, but only until the knuckles (Rema, *ibid.* and 613:3), unless additional areas of the hands become dirty. The same applies to washing upon arising in the morning (S.A. 554:10). If necessary, one may use liquid soap when washing to remove dirt (*Peninei Halacha*, *Zemanim* 10:5). Food may be washed as needed, even though one's hands will inevitably become wet in the process (M.B. 554:19). It is also permitted to use a

damp cloth to refresh oneself, provided it does not contain enough moisture to wet another object upon contact (Rema 554:14).

Some maintain that dishes not needed on Tisha B'Av itself should not be washed (R. Moshe Feinstein, *Shema'ata D'Moshe*, p.434). Others permit washing dishes after midday (*Ohr L'tzion* 3:29:14). Dishes needed for children may be washed at any time, and dishes needed for the meal after the fast may be washed according to all opinions, even if hot water is necessary (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* 71:4; *Peninei Halacha* 10:5; *Chazon Ovadia*, p.294).

3. Anointing

Applying oils, creams, lotions, cosmetics, or perfumes for pleasure is prohibited. Anointing for medical purposes, such as medicated creams or ointments, is permitted (S.A. 554:15). Most contemporary authorities also permit deodorant intended to remove unpleasant odor rather than provide enjoyment (*Bi'ur Halacha* 554:15; *Shema'ata D'Moshe*, p.433; *Piskei Teshuvot* 554:14).

4. Leather Footwear

Leather shoes may not be worn on Tisha B'Av (S.A. 554:16). Some authorities permit comfortable non-leather shoes (*Halichot Shlomo* 5:17), while others prohibit good quality non-leather footwear and require wearing shoes that are somewhat less comfortable than one's usual shoes (*Teshuvot V'hanhgot* 5:168:7). Some maintain that although comfortable non-leather shoes are technically permitted, it is preferable to be stringent (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* 71:11). According to all opinions, less sturdy shoes are permitted. In addition, if no suitable non-leather footwear is available and circumstances require walking outdoors, one may wear leather shoes until reaching the shul or destination, at which point they should be removed (S.A. 614:4).

5. Marital Relations

The laws governing a married couple on Tisha B'Av are similar to those observed during shiva. Marital relations are prohibited (S.A. 554:1), and spouses should sleep separately or separate the beds (S.A. 554:18). Physical contact should be avoided at night, though some permit physical contact during the day (see M.B. 554:37; *Chazon Ovadia*, p.307). Many permit passing items (*Kera Alai Moed*, ch.8, citing R. Eliashiv; *Chazon Ovadia*, p.307), though some are more stringent at night (*Kaf HaChaim* 554:85; R. Mordechai Eliyahu, *Hilchot Chagim*, p.213).

ADDITIONAL EXPRESSIONS OF MOURNING

Besides the five afflictions, several additional halachot and customs of mourning are observed on Tisha B'Av.

Torah Study

Since Torah gladdens the heart, regular Torah study is prohibited (S.A. 554:1). One may study topics relating to mourning, the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*, Tisha B'Av, the laws of mourning, the book of Eicha, the tragic sections of Yirmiyahu, selected passages of Iyov, and similar material (S.A. 554:2). Most *poskim* do not permit studying them in depth (M.B. 554:5), though one may study them well enough to ensure he understands what is learned (R. Shmuel Kamenetsky, *Kovetz Halachot, Bein HaMetzarim*, p.250; see also *Aruch HaShulchan* 554:4). One who is delivering a speech or *shiur* on the topic of Tisha B'Av may cite relevant sources to the discussion, even if they are not included in the official list of permitted Torah study materials (R. Avigdor Nebenzahl, *Yerushalayim B'moadeha, Bein HaMetzarim*, p.224).

Opinions differ regarding the recitation

of Tehillim on Tisha B'Av, particularly those that are beyond one's regular daily recitation (see M.B. 554:7; *Piskei Teshuvot* 554:4; notes in the *Dirshu* edition of the M.B., #13). However, prayers for those in danger, such as IDF soldiers and the ill, are certainly appropriate (*Chazon Ovadia*, p.311; *Kovetz MiBeit Levi*, vol.13, p.45). The study or discussion of *musar* (ethical improvement) to improve a person's conduct and strengthening one's relationship to Hashem is permitted on Tisha B'Av (Meiri, *Moed Katan* 21a; *Sdei Chemed*, *Aveilut* 25; *Chazon Ovadia*, p.316), though some require omitting the Torah and rabbinic sources quoted therein (R. Ephraim Greenblatt, *Rivevot Ephraim* 1:386, citing R. Chaim Kanievsky).

Sitting Low

It is customary to sit on the floor or a low chair from nightfall until *chatzot* (S.A. and Rema 559:3; M.B. 559:12; Yalkut Yosef, p.509). Some maintain that one should sit on a seat less than 1 *tefach* (8 cm) high (*Hilchot Chagim*, p.215), many permit a height of up to 3 *tefachim* (24 cm) (*Piskei Teshuvot* 559:4), while others maintain that there is no fixed height and that any seat noticeably lower than one's usual chair is permitted (*Halichot Shlomo*, *Moadim*, ch.15; *Ashrei Ha'Ish* 71:15). One may sit normally when traveling in a car or on a bus (*Kra Alai Moed*, ch.8).

Sleeping

Some are accustomed to sleep on the floor with a rock beneath their head, while others remove their pillow, or one of their pillows, if they normally use more than one. The underlying idea is to make oneself somewhat less comfortable than usual (S.A. and Rema 555:2). However, this custom does not apply to someone who is ill or weak (M.B. 555:7).

Greetings

One may not greet others in the usual

cheerful manner on Tisha B'Av. If greeted by someone unaware of the halacha, one should respond quietly and respectfully so as not to embarrass the other person (S.A. 554:20). According to many authorities, one should likewise refrain from wishing others "good morning" (M.B. 554:41). Some also recommend avoiding expressions such as "goodbye" (*Halichot Shlomo*, ch.15), although others maintain that this is only a recommendation and not a strict prohibition (*Chazon Ovadia*, p.330; see *Be'er Heitev* 385:2). However, congratulating someone on a significant milestone is permitted when appropriate (*Piskei Teshuvot* 554:19).

Work

One should avoid work that distracts from the mourning of the day, particularly during the morning (S.A. 554:22). Even afterward, one should avoid becoming absorbed in business or other activities that divert one's attention from the day's purpose (M.B. 554:49). One who must work for his livelihood should do so only after *chatzot* (*Aruch HaShulchan* 554:21). One who would otherwise suffer a significant financial loss or risk losing his job should consult a halachic authority, as there may be grounds for leniency (see S.A. 554:23). According to some, a G-d-fearing person should refrain from all labor throughout the day (*Chayei Adam*), while others maintain that there is no need to adhere to this stringency, as it is omitted by the *Mishna Berura* (R. Chaim Kanievsky).

Brief actions, such as turning on a light, are permitted even in the morning (Rema, O.C. 554:22), but more involved tasks, such as washing floors or dishes or repairing appliances, should not be performed (*Aruch HaShulchan* 559:9; *Piskei Teshuvot* 554:21). Some authorities forbid reading the news or other secular material on Tisha B'Av (*Aruch*

HaShulchan Y.D. 384:9; *Piskei Teshuvot* 554:1), while others permit it, though it is best if done briefly and without becoming overly engrossed (*Chazon Ovadia*, p.315). Historical works that focus on the tragedies of the Jewish people are permitted, and even encouraged (*Piskei Teshuvot* 554:2).

Many people in Israel visit the Kotel over Tisha B'Av to mourn for the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* at the very location in which it stood. One should make sure to maintain the proper decorum of the day, even if one is with a large group or meets friends there. One may greet them by saying that they should merit to see the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash* (see *Peninei Halacha*, *Zemanim* 10:12)

PRACTICES OF TEFILLA

Tallit and Tefillin

The prevalent custom among Ashkenazim and some Sephardim is not to don *tallit* and *tefillin* at *Shacharit* as an expression of mourning, but rather at *Mincha*, when the intensity of the mourning is somewhat diminished (S.A., O.C. 555:1). Other Sephardim do don *tallit* and *tefillin* at *Shacharit* as usual (*Chazon Ovadia*, p.366). One should follow the established custom of the synagogue in which one is praying, even if it differs from one's personal custom (*Ohr L'tzion* 3:29:22). One should nevertheless wear a *tallit katan*, but without reciting a *beracha* (S.A., O.C. 555:1).

Eicha and Kinot

At night, the *megilla* of *Eicha* is customarily read aloud in shul, followed by a selection of *kinot* (S.A. and Rema, O.C. 559:2). In some communities in Israel, it is read from a scroll and a *beracha* is recited on it (*Luach Eretz Yisrael*). Many read *Eicha* quietly along with the *chazan* (M.B. 559:15; *Hilchot Chagim*, p.217). Those who do not attend shul should also read

it privately (M.B. 559:5), and some *poskim* encourage women who can to do so as well, even if they are unable to attend shul (*Teshuvot V'hanhagot* 2:250). However, according to most opinions, there is no need for women to hear *Eicha* (*Halichot Beita* 25:19; *Piskei Teshuvot* 559:2). It is customary that only some of the lights are turned on in the shul, and the *parochet* is removed from in front of the *aron Kodesh* (Rema, O.C. 559:1-2).

In the morning, a more extensive selection of *kinot* is recited, and in some communities, this continues until *chatzot*, when work again becomes permitted (Rema, O.C. 559:3; M.B. 559:13). Some also read *Eicha* a second time during the day (M.B. 559:2; *Chazon Ovadia*, p.391). One should not leave the shul or engage in unrelated conversation during the recitation of *kinot*, so as to remain focused on the mourning of the day (S.A., O.C. 559:5). Although Ashkenazim and Sephardim recite different collections of *kinot*, they all share the same purpose – mourning the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* and the many tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people.

Nachem and Aneinu

On Tisha B'Av, the special prayer of *Nachem*, in which we ask Hashem to comfort us over the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* and Jerusalem, is inserted into the *beracha* of *Boneh Yerushalayim* in the *Amida*. According to the more prevalent Sephardic custom, it is recited in every *Amida* on Tisha B'Av (S.A. 557:1 and M.B. 557:1). According to Ashkenazic custom and the custom of some Sephardim, it is recited only at *Mincha*, when the *Beit HaMikdash* actually began to burn and it is therefore especially appropriate to pray for consolation (Rema 557:1; *Kaf HaChaim* 557:7; see also *Levush* 557:1). Ashkenazim who are exempt from fasting also recite *Nachem* in

Birkat HaMazon (Rema, O.C. 557:1), whereas Sephardim generally do not (*Chazon Ovadia*, p.288). One who forgets to recite *Nachem* does not repeat either the *Amida* or *Birkat HaMazon* (S.A., O.C. 557:1).

Although various proposals have been made to modify the wording of *Nachem* in light of the Jewish people's return to Jerusalem, the widespread custom remains to recite the traditional text (*Chazon Ovadia*, p.377; *Peninei Halacha* 10:16; *Sichot HaRav Tzvi Yehuda*, *Eretz Yisrael*, p.249; R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik).

According to Sephardic custom, the paragraph of *Aneinu* for fast days is recited in every silent *Amida* throughout Tisha B'Av, including *Ma'ariv*, and the *chazan* recites it as a separate *beracha* at both *Shacharit* and *Mincha*. According to Ashkenazic custom, individuals recite *Aneinu* only at *Mincha*, while the *chazan* recites it at both *Shacharit* and *Mincha* (M.B. 557:3).

MOTZA'EI TISHA B'AV

Birkat HaLevana

Birkat HaLevana is generally recited after *Ma'ariv* following Tisha B'Av (Rema, O.C. 426:1; M.B. 426:11; *Chazon Ovadia*, p. 410), although some recite it during the Nine Days (Gra, O.C. 426). Ideally, one should first eat something and put on leather shoes (M.B. 426:11). However, if delaying would mean missing the opportunity to recite it with a *minyán*, it may be recited beforehand (*Sha'ar HaTziun* 426:9; *Nitei Gavriel* 87:3).

Nine Days Customs

Many of the customs of the Nine Days continue after the end of the fast until the following day, since the *Beit HaMikdash* continued burning throughout the tenth of Av. Ashkenazic custom is generally to refrain from eating meat, drinking wine, laundering clothing, bathing for

pleasure, listening to music, and taking haircuts until midday on the tenth of Av. According to the more prevalent Sephardic custom, eating meat and drinking wine remain prohibited throughout the tenth of Av, while the other restrictions end when the fast concludes (S.A. and Rema, 558:1; M.B. 558:2-3; *Chazon Ovadia*, p.413). Some Sephardim follow the Ashkenazic practice (*Hilchot Chagim*, p.225).

TISHA B'AV ON THURSDAY

Since this year Tisha B'Av falls on Thursday, bathing, laundry, haircuts, and shaving are permitted on Friday morning according to all opinions, in honor of Shabbat (M.B. 558:3). Some authorities permit all of these preparations already on Thursday night when necessary (*She'ilat Ya'avetz* 1:96; *Chazon Ovadia*, p.415), while others permit them only on Friday morning (*Luach Eretz Yisrael*; *Ashrei Ha'Ish* 71:41). A third opinion permits doing laundry on Thursday night so that there will be sufficient time for the rest of the Shabbat preparations on Friday, but maintains that bathing, haircuts, and shaving should only be done on Friday (*Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata* 42:5; R. Yaakov Ariel, cited in *Oholei Halacha*, p.238). All other Nine Days restrictions that are unrelated to Shabbat preparations remain in effect as in other years. ■

Rabbi Eli Ozarowski serves as editor of the Tzurba M'Rabanan English halacha series, as well as the editor of the written material for the Semichas Chaver halacha program. He is also the author of the OU's Torat Imecha Halacha Series for women and a translator for the Steinsaltz Mishna series. Rabbi Ozarowski received semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and holds an M.A. from the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. He lives in Mitzpeh Yericho with his wife, Zemira, who serves as Director of the Women's Division at OU Israel, together with their nine children. Rabbi Ozarowski gives many shiurim in the community and is also frequently consulted on halachic matters.



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Special Guest Dvar Torah

Breaking Out of the Straits

“From between the straits a people is redeemed, through teachers armed with spiritual strength, who have no need for a rod of severity.” (Rav Kook)

Klal Yisrael always has two parallel viewpoints. One is rooted in the present, viewing and analyzing current affairs, while the other is rooted in eternity, guiding us to live our lives based on an internal, spiritual stream of consciousness.

The first viewpoint currently leads us to focus on what's going on in the Straits of Hormuz, while the other leads us to contemplate entirely different straits. In the first chapter of *Eicha* we will sadly read about the harsh fate of our ancient kingdom: “All her pursuers overtook her within the straits”.

What is the meaning of these straits we lament being caught in?

Some commentators understand it to mean

that we were trapped between the borders of hostile nations, whereas the Midrash (*Eicha Rabba* 1:29) perceives it as a trap in time, between the two harsh dates of 17th of Tammuz and Tisha b'Av.

One commentary is based on geography, the second is based on time. These can both be perceived as external explanations, whereas our faith system teaches us to always look deeper, and attempt to reach an internal, spiritual understanding, that can be seen as the source for all of the external circumstances of our defeats and failures.

When attempting to pinpoint the internal reason for each *churban*, our sages deduced that in the era of the First Temple it was mainly due to the breaching of our covenant with *Hashem*, while in the era of the Second Temple the source of our downfall was primarily the breaching of our covenant with one another.

The geopolitical circumstances have changed dramatically since the destruction of our ancient temples and commonwealths, but our internal, spiritual weaknesses, though significantly refined in the course of our prolonged exile, still need to be corrected.

We have witnessed and partaken in many stages of our redemption, we thank *Hashem* for them every day, and especially on days such as *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* and *Yom Yerushalayim*, but when this time of year comes around, between the straits, we concentrate on what is still missing, on the failings that are still awaiting redemption. We ask ourselves: how can we break out of these straits? What might

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uplift us to the point where we will be able to break the barriers, correct past failures and finally be completely redeemed?

An answer to this question was offered by our great teacher, Rabbi A.I. HaKohen Kook. Rav Kook famously established the still-existing Merkaz-HaRav Yeshiva in Jerusalem, but back when he was the Rabbi of Jaffa and the *moshavot*, he established a Yeshiva there as well. Every year that institution would publish a calendar, and Rav Kook would contribute a short yet profound saying about the essence of each month. In the 1913-1914 (5674) edition of the calendar, he penned, regarding this time of the year:

“From between the straits a people is redeemed, through teachers armed with spiritual strength, who have no need for a rod of severity.”

Rav Kook is apparently referring to the *halacha* quoted in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 551:18), prohibiting teachers from even mildly striking their students (as was accepted in the past) during the period of *bein-ha'mitsarim*. Rav Kook is implying here that when physical force is used in education, it is a sign of spiritual weakness in the educator. Where there is true greatness, where there is spiritual strength, there is no need of coercion and force.

Rav Kook always taught that better than

fighting one's ideological foe is to try to understand what grains of truth might be on his side, and incorporate them in our own, Torah-based, ideology. Instead of focusing on the negative sides of other parts of *Am Yisrael* and battling them, we should elevate ourselves to a higher realm, in which our own *emunah* and ideology will be so complete and so pure, that it will win over our adversaries primarily using love and trust. When the teachers of the nation are armed with spiritual strength, there is no need for the rod of severity, which always exacts a heavy toll of inner discord and resentment.

Rav Kook himself expressed this vision most powerfully (*Orot HaKodesh* vol. 3 p. 323):

“And if we were destroyed, and the world was destroyed with us, through baseless hatred (sinat-chinam) — we shall return to being built, and the world shall be built with us, through baseless love (ahavat-chinam).”

May we utilize this time of year to grow spiritually, to arm ourselves with true spiritual strength. May we find the ability to lay down the rod of severity, and replace it with greatness and *ahavat-chinam*. May we find the way to speak to the rock instead of striking it, may we pave the way to true *nechama*. May we return to being built, and the world shall be built with us. ■



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Beyond the Ruins: Finding God Where We Least Expected Him

Every year, as Tisha b'Av approaches, we prepare ourselves to mourn absence.

We mourn a destroyed Beit HaMikdash, a lost Jerusalem, exile, persecution, and centuries of tears. We sit on the floor and read *Eicha*. We recite *Kinot*, recalling tragedies that span generations. Tisha b'Av is the day that seems to embody distance—distance from our land, our Temple, and perhaps, most painfully, from the revealed Presence of God.

Yet beneath the mourning lies one of Judaism's deepest paradoxes.

The very day that commemorates our greatest sense of distance from God also offers the possibility of our deepest closeness to Him.

Anyone who has walked through profound personal loss knows that grief can uncover something unexpected. There are moments when suffering strips away every illusion of control, every carefully constructed certainty, every distraction that ordinarily fills our lives. We are left with almost nothing.

And somehow, in that terrifying emptiness,

there is Someone.

Not answers.

Not explanations.

Not even relief.

A Presence.

There is an intimacy with God that none of us would ever choose to learn.

It cannot be acquired through scholarship alone or manufactured through eloquent prayer. It is born in places no one willingly enters. When everything superficial falls away and we finally acknowledge how little is within our control, we find ourselves standing before the Ribbono Shel Olam with nothing but honesty.

In *Tehillim* we read, מן המצר קראתי יְיָ — “From the narrow place I called to God.” Perhaps the emphasis is not only on the calling, but on the narrow place itself. Certain encounters with God become possible only after life has narrowed, when everything nonessential has fallen away.

Judaism never glorifies suffering. We pray for healing, not hardship. We ask God to



remove pain, not increase it. Yet when suffering comes despite our prayers, it can reveal a relationship with God unlike any we have previously known.

Perhaps this is one of the deepest messages of Tisha b'Av.

Our relationship with God was never destroyed.

Chazal teach that when Israel went into exile, the Shechinah went with them — **גלו ושכינה עמם**. God did not remain behind in the ruins of the Beit HaMikdash waiting for His children to return. He entered exile alongside them. The destruction was real. The loss was immeasurable. But Divine companionship was never withdrawn.

For years, I understood *tza'ar haShechinah* as God's pain over the destruction of His Temple and the suffering of His people. Then, on the drive to my son Yehudah's wedding, I began to understand it differently.

We were on our way to celebrate one of the happiest days of our family's life. Yet one chair would remain empty. My son, Binyamin, who had been killed months earlier defending Am Yisrael, would not be there to dance with his brother beneath the chuppah.

I found myself thinking that while I believe with all my heart that Binyamin's soul rests close to the Kisei HaKavod, surrounded by the radiance of the Divine Presence, perhaps there was still something he longed for—not because Heaven is lacking, but because love longs for presence.

He would have wanted to dance with us.

To embrace his siblings.

To celebrate as a family.

And in that moment I wondered whether this is, in some small way, what Chazal mean by *tza'ar haShechinah*.

God is perfect. He lacks nothing.

Yet He commands, **ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם** —“Make for Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell among them.”

Not because He needs a home.

Because He desires a relationship.

Because love longs to dwell with the beloved.

The destruction of the Beit HaMikdash was not merely the loss of a building.

It was the loss of an encounter.

Perhaps Tisha b'Av is not only the day we realize how much we miss God.

It is also the day we begin to glimpse how deeply God desires to dwell among us once again.

If this is true, then the work of Av is not merely to mourn the past. It is to prepare ourselves for that encounter by becoming vessels capable of receiving His Presence. Sometimes the deepest closeness is found simply by remaining present—by saying, “Ribbono Shel Olam, I do not understand, but I know You are here. And I am with You.”

This insight casts new light on the Jewish calendar. There are two remarkable journeys of twenty-one days.

The first begins on the Seventeenth of Tammuz, when Jerusalem's walls were breached, and culminates in Tisha b'Av with the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. Even after the fast

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ends, the fire continues to rage. Chazal teach that most of the Temple burned on the Tenth of Av, when it seemed that nothing remained.

The second begins on Rosh Hashanah and continues through the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Hoshana Rabbah. These are twenty-one days of purification, return, and growing closeness to God—אני והוא.

Then comes the day after.

Shemini Atzeret.

After weeks of spiritual ascent, God says, **קשה עלי מירדתכם** —“Your departure is difficult for Me.”

Stay one more day.

Not because He needs us.

Because He loves us.

Because He desires one more moment of intimacy with His people.

How remarkable that the day following the twenty-one days of Tishrei is defined by God's longing to remain with His people, while the day following the twenty-one days of mourning is the day when the fires of destruction reach their fiercest intensity.

These are not opposing journeys.

They are mirror images.

One reveals God's Presence **באתגליא** — openly.

The other reveals it **בהעלם גדול** — through profound concealment.

One is the intimacy of embrace.

The other is the intimacy discovered after everything else has been stripped away.

Both lead to the same destination: a relationship that transcends circumstance.

Perhaps that is the invitation of the month of Av.

Not simply to remember what was destroyed, but to recognize that even when the Temple fell, the covenant did not. The walls collapsed, but the Shechinah never

abandoned His people. Sometimes God is found in the grandeur of the Mikdash. Sometimes He is found sitting beside us among the ruins.

May we merit the day when these two journeys become one—when the hidden closeness of exile is transformed into the revealed closeness of redemption; when the One who walked beside us through every sorrow will once again dwell openly among His people; when the fast of Tisha b'Av becomes a day of joy and gladness; and when Jerusalem is rebuilt with the Divine Presence revealed in all its splendor. ■

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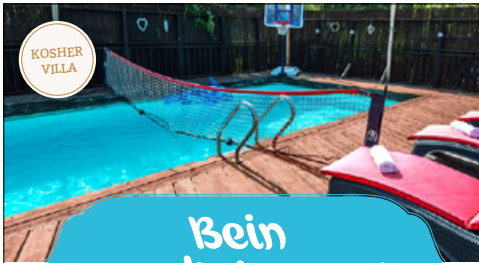
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לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Should I Warn Her?

Nicky asks:

Hey Aleeza, I could really use your advice. My candidate told me she's been on 4 dates with a guy she met, let's call him Jacob Jacobs, and she's excited about him. The problem? I heard from a different friend that he's problematic.. Nothing hectic, just that he was very critical towards her, made her feel like she's not good enough and he was very unpleasant towards the end of their relationship. Should I tell this to my friend who's currently dating Jacob and likes him? I feel it might ruin what they have, but if things go south I'd feel so guilty I didn't say anything.. What should I do?

Aleeza answers:

Before sharing information that could influence someone's future, it's worth

remembering that Judaism doesn't only teach us to guard our speech, it teaches us how to use it responsibly. The Chofetz Chaim dedicates an entire section of Hilchot Lashon Hara to situations involving shidduchim, recognizing that sometimes speaking is appropriate, and sometimes remaining silent causes harm.

This is one of the most delicate situations a matchmaker, friend, or community member can face.

On the one hand, we are commanded to guard our speech. On the other hand, we are also commanded to protect others from potential harm. The wisdom of the Chofetz Chaim is that these two values are not contradictory, they simply require great care.

When it comes to shidduchim, the Chofetz Chaim permits sharing negative information only when it serves a constructive purpose (l'toelet) and when very specific conditions are met.

Ask yourself a few questions.

First, do you know this information firsthand, or are you repeating what someone else told you? If it is secondhand information, be especially cautious. Rumors, misunderstandings, and one person's interpretation of a relationship are not enough to influence someone else's future.

Second, is the information factual, or is it an opinion? Saying someone was "critical" or "unpleasant" may describe one person's experience, but it is not necessarily an objective description of who that person is. Relationships are complex, and two people can experience the very same individual very

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differently.

Third, is there a real concern that your friend needs in order to make a wise decision? The goal is never to convince someone to end a relationship. The goal is to ensure they have information that could reasonably protect them from harm.

In your situation, I would not rush to tell your friend, "I heard he's problematic." That statement is vague, potentially damaging, and based on someone else's experience. Instead, I would first encourage the previous girlfriend, if she genuinely believes there are important concerns, to speak directly with a competent rabbi who is knowledgeable in the laws of shmiras halashon and shidduchim. Together they can determine whether the information meets the criteria for sharing.

Meanwhile, continue supporting your candidate by asking thoughtful questions after each date. "How do you feel when you're with him?" "Do you feel respected?" "Can you be yourself?" Help her notice her own experience rather than replacing it with someone else's.

Our role as matchmakers is not to decide for people. It is to help them see clearly enough to decide wisely.

May Hashem grant us the wisdom to know when silence protects, when speaking protects, and the humility to choose our words

with truth, kindness, and responsibility. May every conversation we have become a source of blessing, guiding our singles toward healthy, joyful, and lasting marriages.

Blessings, Aleeza ■

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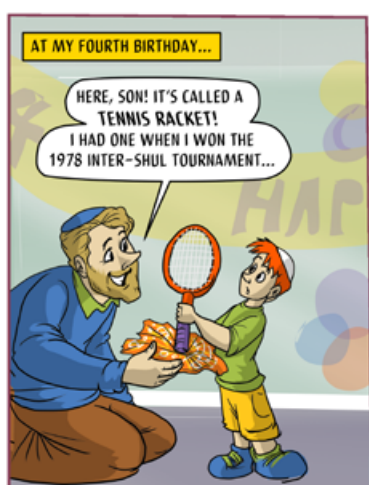
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YAAKOV GREENBERG GUSH CHAPTER DIRECTOR RETELLING OF THE SPIES – A PROACTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Moshe begins his major speech by retelling the story of the spies. There are several significant differences between the original story in Shelach and the retelling in Devarim; I will mention two.

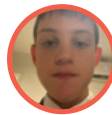
First, in Shelach, Hashem tells Moshe to send the spies, while in Devarim, Bnei Yisrael pressures Moshe into sending the spies. Second, Shelach does not mention that Moshe was punished by not being allowed to enter Israel because of the spies. Moshe is only punished by not being allowed to enter Israel in Parashat Chukat, 38 years later, because he hit the rock. However, in Sefer Devarim, Moshe blames the sin of the spies as the cause of his punishment.

This may be a matter of perspective. Sefer Bamidbar tells the story from the nation's perspective. Hashem desired to send spies to scout the Land before conquering it, but the nation succumbed to the spies' lashon hara and abandoned the conquest altogether. The failure of the nation is based on the **reaction** of the nation to the spies. Moshe is blameless, as he never faltered from Hashem's commandment to conquer the Land.

Sefer Devarim is from the perspective of Moshe, their leader. Moshe faults himself for not seeing the danger signs: Are they asking to send spies because they are committed to conquest, or is there a part of the nation that is scared? Should I let the spies walk in and

announce their findings before the whole nation without speaking to me privately? Moshe understands that the nation's failure with the spies can be partially attributed to his inadequacy in being a **proactive** leader.

We have a choice of seeing our failure through a **reactive** lens or a **proactive** lens. Did we fail because we did not reach our goal, or did we fail because we did not set ourselves up to succeed? One is from the perspective of the nation, and the other is from the perspective of a leader. Many times, **proactive** decision making changes our **reactions** when we hit stumbling blocks on our way to success.



DOVID ELIAS 9TH GRADE, EFRAT THE LAST BOOK

This week's parasha opens with Moshe beginning his great final address to the Israelites, reviewing their forty-year journey through the wilderness. Rabbi Sacks asks: Why does the Torah dedicate an entire final book—Devarim (literally meaning “words”)—to Moshe repeating and reviewing the history and laws just as the people stand on the threshold of the Promised Land?

Devarim is not merely a recap; it is a book of covenant renewal. While the previous books feature God speaking directly to or through Moshe, in Devarim it is Moshe who speaks, translating the divine law into the human language of history, memory, and responsibility.

The superficial reason for this review is practical: the generation entering the land was young and had not personally witnessed

the Exodus or the revelation at Sinai. But there is a much deeper reason. The Israelites were about to construct a sovereign nation, shifting from a wilderness existence sustained by daily miracles to a normal society dealing with politics, economics, and warfare.

Rabbi Sacks argues that a free society cannot be sustained by miracles or external force; it requires education, collective memory, and internalized responsibility. As the Jewish people continue to return to and build the State of Israel, it remains essential that we look back at our history, educate the next generation, and maintain a free society rooted in our shared moral commitment to God's covenant. ■

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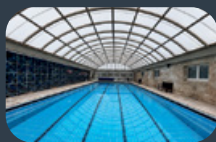
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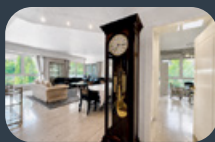


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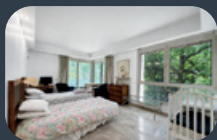
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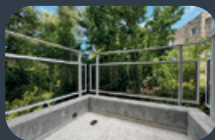
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