

*Mazal Tov to Rabbis Natan Goldstein, Shmuel Jeger & Zalman Max upon being awarded Smicha by Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim. Extended Mazal tov wishes to their Chushuve Rebetzins, children, parents, siblings & grandparents.*

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### **REMEMBERING SADNESS**

The current period of time on the Jewish calendar is one of remembering sadness – of recalling what was lost to us and the world with the destruction of the Temple and the resultant exile imposed upon the Jewish people. The period of bein hametzarim – the Three Weeks and the Nine Days – that culminates in Tisha b'Av is marked by the absence of any personal or national festivities, by changes in diet, and abstaining from major purchases, among other laws and customs that pertain particularly to this period of time.

It is therefore a subdued period of the year, one that carries with it a heavy psychological and historical burden. No one wishes to remember sad events. In fact, part of the genius of the human psyche is to sublimate such memories into our subconscious mind so as not to interfere with our ability to get on with life and not wallow in sadness and depression over past events and traumas. Forgetfulness is thus seen as a blessing.

Moshe himself in his final words to Israel mentions the blessing of forgetfulness as being one of the gifts of the Creator to human beings. Yet, we find that in Jewish life and practice we are bidden to purposely forego forgetfulness and remember sad events – indeed, almost to treasure them and appreciate their occurrence and lesson.

The commemoration of the day of the death of a loved one – *yahrzeit/azkarah* – is a sacred custom in Jewish life. The remembrance of the Holocaust as well as of all of the previous terrible massacres of Jews over the ages occupies special days on the Jewish calendar and also special prayers and commemorations. So, why are we so hung up on remembering sadness?

The answer lies in the Jewish understanding of life itself. A life that knows no sadness or disappointment is pretty much an impossibility in this world. The great rabbis when visiting Raban Gamliel of Yavneh who was mourning the loss of a loved one remarked that they felt sadly relieved at the event. “Until now he apparently suffered no reverses in life so perhaps his entire reward for his good deeds would be paid to him in this world. Now, seeing his current sadness, we appreciate that the true payment for his goodness and piety is truly reserved for the eternal World to Come.”

Life automatically brings with it moments of sadness and tragedy. In fact, the ability to cope with such sadness and difficulty becomes the true test of a person and a nation. The Jewish people, as a whole, annealed in the fires of unspeakable tragedies, have always risen to greatness. Its achievements in every generation and location can only be truly appreciated in the backdrop of the tragedy and sadness that has always preceded these accomplishments and achievements.

If we forget the sadness then there is no way to truly measure and appreciate the joy and attainment. We should be able to appreciate the restoration of millions of Jews to the Land of Israel only if the exile and its harsh memories are real to us and still in our memory bank.

The fact that there are so many Jews that do not appreciate the fact of Israel's rebirth is due to the loss of the memory of sadness within them and much of Jewish society. The Holocaust deniers are at one and the same time the greatest Israel haters. There is a definite correlation between these two hateful processes.

The period of the memory of sadness that we are now experiencing serves as a prelude to the great and awesome days of the High Holy Days and the joy of Succot that are now already in the wings. Our survival of sadness and our resilience in being able to deal with it serves to strengthen us for the great days of Tishrei that are only a few short weeks away.

Remembering losses and defeats enables us to forge victories and gains. I have often thought that this is part of the reason behind the Ashkenazic custom of naming new born children after the names of departed loved ones. The remembrance of those who are no longer here physically with us but whose lives and hopes will yet be carried on by their descendants creates a bittersweet joy. It vindicates the past while pointing us to the future. So remembering sadness is not such a negative thing after all. For it alone helps shape our lives, dreams and aspirations. And this is the greatest antidote to depression and a permanent state of sadness. Tzom kal. Shabat shalom.

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### **Weekly Parsha :: PARSHAT DEVARIM :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

Moshe's long and beautiful valedictory address begins in this week's parsha. It is perhaps the most personal part of our holy Torah, for it lays bare the humanity and emotions of Moshe himself. His frustrations with a people who are destined and charged with holiness and seemingly always shy away from that destiny are clearly evident in his words. His cry of “*eichah*” – how can it be? – is the forerunner, in the words of the Midrash of the ultimate “*eichah*” which causes us to weep and mourn on Tisha B'Av.

It is not only the stress of leadership that pains Moshe, though that is certainly part of his burden. It is the relentless carping and unappreciative attitude of Israel towards its blessings and its relation of uniqueness with God that gives him a sense of brooding sadness and impending troubles. Moshe will state in the Book of Dvarim: “I know that after my death, in the future, you will stray from the path of Torah and worship strange gods. Terrible things will then befall you until the day of final redemption arrives.”

It is the anguish of a parent who fully knows what an error the child is making in pursuing a matter and is absolutely incapable of stopping the personal disaster from happening. The valedictory address of Moshe is therefore not a purely past event but rather a reminder of our weaknesses throughout our history and in current times as well. “*Eichah*” – how can this be? – is a word that aptly fits the Jewish world of today.

Moshe zeroes in on the two main faults of personality that lie at the root of Jewish weakness and disaffection. These are ingratitude and lack of self-worth. The matter of ingratitude is addressed many times in the Torah. The complaints about the manna, the water, the Land of Israel, even the Exodus from Egyptian bondage are quite numerous in the Torah. The entire forty year miraculous sojourn in the desert of Sinai is one long litany of complaint and ingratitude.

The rabbis defined wealth as being satisfied. There are therefore relatively few truly wealthy people in our world. Ingratitude affects family relations, business ventures, and the general psychological well-being of individuals and a society. Lack of self-worth is also very prevalent in Jewish society. In a world where other faiths have hundreds of millions of adherents, Judaism is the smallest of all faiths, number wise.

Moshe told us in the Book of Dvarim that this would be the case – “for you are the smallest in numbers of all nations.” But the inner strength of the Jew always lay in the deeply held conviction of being holy and special, of being chosen by God for an eternal mission in this world. In recent times this belief in ourselves and our mission has been eroded by secularization, ignorance of Judaism by Jews and the pernicious influences of a hedonistic and loose environment.

Moshe's words therefore stand as a rallying cry to combat these twin evils that weaken us and endanger our survival and progress. This season of the year presses us to heed Moshe's words and message ever more diligently. It is the pathway to ultimate consolation and redemption. Shabat shalom.

For the week ending 21 July 2007 / 6 Av 5767

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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

## OVERVIEW

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, Sefer Devarim. This Book is also called Mishneh Torah, "Repetition of the Torah" (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). Sefer Devarim relates what Moshe told Bnei Yisrael during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into Eretz Yisrael. Moshe reviews the mitzvot, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo: from the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe's guidance to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua's leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the meraglim. The Parsha opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they hadn't sinned by sending spies into Eretz Yisrael. Hashem would have given them without a fight all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results. The entire generation would die in the desert; Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to Hashem's decree was to want to "go up and fight" to redress the sin. He recounts how they wouldn't listen when he told them not to go, that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon these lands were not to be part of the map of Eretz Yisrael in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

## INSIGHTS

### Stormy Weather

**"Hashem, your G-d, has multiplied you and behold! You are like the stars of heaven in abundance." (1:10)**

The stars are only visible when the sky is clear. On a cloudy night, they fade from view and shed no light on this world.

A flame, on the other hand, shines through mist and cloud and fog. It penetrates the gloom to make itself seen.

Thus it is with the Jewish People.

When we dwell in tranquility we shine like the stars. However, when the storm clouds of history blacken our skies, then our luster is dimmed and fades to black.

This is the picture we see today.

Have you ever seen Orthodox Jews look anything other than weird in the media? Why is that? Why is it that only Muslims look exotic and picturesque against all those Lawrence of Arabia sand dunes? Why is it that the lens loves every Eastern cult, whereas the People of the Book are singularly unphotogenic? Why do we seem parochial and rather shabby when exposed to the glare of the TV's gaze?

Our Sages teach that the Jewish People will experience four exiles. These exiles are hinted to in the very opening lines of the Torah. "And the Land was formless (Babylon) and void (Persia/Medea) and darkness (Greece) on the face of the deep (Rome)." Since the Torah is the blueprint of the world, something written at the very beginning of the blueprint indicates that these exiles are a fundamental process in the history of the world.

The first of these four kingdoms took the kingship from the Jewish People. Each empire has successively grabbed the mantle of power from its predecessor. Ultimately the fourth empire, the empire of Esav/Rome and its current heirs, will return kingship to the Jewish People. Until that time however, the fourth kingdom has the power of the kingship and all its trappings: It writes the songs of the world, for music is a scion of kingship: King David, the prototype of all kings, is called the 'sweet singer of Israel'. But the lyre of David breathes the songs of majesty no more.

When the Jewish People went into this last exile, the exile of Rome, the Temple songs of the Levi'im were silenced. The Romans took that music and made it serve a new master. It resurfaced hundreds of years later as the Gregorian chants of the church.

If music and religion are but two aspects of imperial cultural domination, television is the ultimate form of this thrall. Television is the dream factory

that allows the ruling power to foist its world-view on its vassal states. It places the minds of its subjects in a cultural iron mask. Wherever you can put up a satellite antenna and beam down a Big Mac from the sky - there the empire rules.

The Romans built the best roads in the world. But if they were alive today, they would be producing sitcoms. Television is an instrument of kingship. The kingship is not ours at the moment. This is not just a physical reality; it's a mystical reality. It means that when we attempt, as the Jewish People, to take hold of the reins of kingship, be that music or the television, we must inevitably look ridiculous and fail.

The Kingdom of Heaven is mirrored in the kingdom of Earth. The Jewish People are in their darkest exile and the Divine Presence is in that exile with us. This is an exile of such totality that most of us don't even realize that we are in exile. We have almost totally accepted upon ourselves the yoke of the empire, its icons and its ideas. We are glued to their visions. We wear their clothes. We think their thoughts.

Very soon, however, the Jewish People will be a torch; nothing will prevent our radiance from breaking through the gloom to light up the world. No power will be able to extinguish our light and no decree will be able to stifle the brilliance of our love for our Father in Heaven.

Sources: Based on the Midrash Rabba and Divrei Sha'arie Chaim

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## Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

### PARSHAS DEVARIM

#### These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Yisrael. (1:1)

Sefer Devarim is different in nature from the other four Chumashim. The mere fact that this sefer begins with the words, "These are the words that Moshe spoke," speaks volumes about its unique character. As a preface to the entire sefer, we will select the approaches to understanding this sefer's uniqueness. In the Talmud Megillah 31b, Chazal state that Moshe Rabbeinu himself declared the curses in Sefer Devarim. The Avnei Nezer explains that while Hashem clearly presented the material in Sefer Devarim to Moshe, it contains greater human input than the previous four. Indeed, we can view Sefer Devarim as the transition stage between Torah She'Bichsav, Written Law, and Torah She'Baal Peh, Oral Law. Sefer Devarim contains both: the Written Law with an element of human content similar to the Oral Law.

The Shem MiShmuel explains his father's statement. The Talmud in Nedarim 27b states, "Had Klal Yisrael not sinned (with the Golden Calf), they would have been given only the Five Books of the Torah and Sefer Yehoshua, which contains the details of Eretz Yisrael's boundaries. Clearly, this does not mean that if not for their sin they would have received only the Written Law. The Oral Law is indispensable to understanding the Written Law. Without Chazal's interpretations, the Chumash as we know it is totally untenable. Every aspect of the Torah is given meaning and depth only with the accompaniment of the Oral Law. Every aspect of Jewish life, every mitzvah, is dependent upon the details provided to us compliments of the Torah She'Baal Peh. What do Chazal mean by this sweeping generalization?

The Midrash in Shir HaShirim teaches that each of the Aseres HaDibros, Ten Commandments, went to every member of Klal Yisrael and asked, "Do you accept me upon you? I contain so many mitzvot, so many laws, so many punishments, so many kal v'chomer, a fortiori inferences, so many rewards." Klal Yisrael responded with a resounding affirmative. In understanding this Midrash, the Shem MiShmuel explains that, at some level, the Aseres HaDibros contain all of the Taryag, 613, mitzvot of the Torah. The entire system of Torah law is included in the Ten Commandments. This may be nearly impossible for us to comprehend today - but, at the time of Divine Revelation, Klal Yisrael's perceptive and cognitive powers were enhanced beyond our ability to grasp. Thus, they perceived every word that Hashem spoke with such clarity of vision that they were able to detect every nuance of each word. Had they been able to retain this spiritual plateau, they would not have needed the vast interpretation rendered to them by the Oral Law, which is no less Divine than its written counterpart. However, they sinned. The Golden Calf debacle reduced their spiritual position, and they were no longer able to

decipher the details of each mitzvah directly from the text of Torah She'Bichsav. Their perception and depth of understanding were now limited. This necessitated the transmission of Torah She'Baal Peh, in order to explain the Written Law and endow it with meaning.

Until this very day, the harmonization between the two types of Divine Torah has been the focus of Talmudic scholars throughout the generations. In the attempt to trace the laws in the oral tradition to their source in the Written Law, they not only create an intellectual appreciation of the law, but they actually create the opportunity for a return to the sinless state of mind that characterized Klal Yisrael prior to the sin. Thus, to a certain extent, the resolution of these two depths of understanding serves to counteract the ramifications of the sin of the Golden Calf.

Sefer Devarim bridges the gap between the Written and Oral Law. Due to the human element, symbolized by Moshe himself presenting the content of Sefer Devarim, it was not as difficult for Klal Yisrael to grasp its laws, derivations, and textual hints and to see the foundation of the Oral Law within it. The ethical messages of Sefer Devarim are more explicit than those of the previous four books, and, thus, are more easily appreciated. People could relate much quicker to this book as a result of its intrinsic dichotomy.

This is why the speech that Moshe delivered at the end of his life had greater impact. It had greater transparency than anything that had preceded it. As such, it aroused a feeling of power and spirituality which Klal Yisrael had not experienced since the Revelation at Har Sinai.

Horav Yaakov Weinberg, zl, cited by Rabbi Boruch Leff in his volume, "Forever His Students," takes a more basic, but similar, approach to understanding the tenor of Sefer Devarim. In the previous four books, Moshe was instructed by Hashem exactly what to write. Even the conversations that we encounter, were those selected by the Almighty to be recorded for posterity. Hashem dictated the text to Moshe word for word. Sefer Devarim was also written by Moshe in accordance with Hashem's will, but Sefer Devarim manifests a slight variation. Moshe had deep, profound thoughts that he wanted to share with the people he had led for forty years. He was about to pass on from this world, and he wanted to say "goodbye" in an instructive manner. Moshe shared his thoughts and emotions with the people. Hashem decided to include these speeches in the Torah. In other words: in the first four books Moshe simply said what Hashem had told him to say. In Sefer Devarim, Moshe spoke first - then Hashem told him to record it. In essence, they are both Hashem's words.

Rav Weinberg concludes that Sefer Devarim should be studied on two different levels. First, what was Moshe, the quintessential rebbe and greatest prophet, thinking when he said the words that comprise Sefer Devarim? Second, what are the eternal, essential values and lessons to be derived from these words once Hashem had decided to transform them from being an extraordinary human statement to be included in His Torah? Hence, Sefer Devarim should be studied in a fashion that differs from the manner in which one studies the other four books. Each pasuk, each halachah, each ethical lesson, must be analyzed on both of the two aforementioned levels. Furthermore, we now infer that Sefer Devarim offers a more natural, innate, emotional, human connection to us. Its human element reaches in to our psyche in a manner unlike that of the other four books. Its mitzvos and ethical lessons connect to us emotionally, as well as spiritually. As we begin to study Sefer Devarim, let us take note of our warm, almost filial, relationship to its verities.

#### **These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Yisrael. (1:1)**

Parashas Devarim is also Shabbos Chazon, named after the first words of the Haftorah (Chazon Yeshayahu), which coincides with the Shabbos preceding Tisha B'Av, our national day of mourning. Moshe Rabbeinu begins this last of the five Chumashim with his rebuke to the nation that he had led for the last forty years. Likewise, Yeshayahu HaNavi rebukes the people of his generation for their misdeeds - behavior which led to the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash. Rebuke is certainly important and necessary, but is it a function that is reserved only for the gadol ha'dor, preeminent leader of the generation? Does the Torah not admonish us to offer rebuke to our fellow Jew on a one-to-one basis? "Hocheah tocheach es amisecha," "You shall reprove your fellow" (Vayikra 19:17). It is the function of every Jew to correct his fellow when he sees him erring. Is it

possible that the only one to notice Klal Yisrael's infractions was Yeshayahu? Where were the others?

Horav Eliyahu Schlessinger, Shlita, cites the Brisker Rav, zl, who explained this with the following analogy. Imagine a beautiful, verdant garden containing a large variety of flowers, replete with an orchard of all types of trees. The scent that emanates from that garden is captivating. The streams and waterfalls that flow throughout the garden are clear and pure. Many people make a point to visit this luscious paradise of beauty and scent to enjoy this most pleasing sight. Whoever comes by to visit leaves enraptured by the experience. They rave for days after participating in this exhilarating experience. Well, almost everyone is excited about the garden. There is one person, however, upon whom you can always count to say something negative about the garden. He notices a flower that is wilting, a branch of a tree that has lost some of its color, or a section of grass that is too dry. Who is this person that is always pointing out the negative aspects of the garden? It is the gardener - and that is his job. In order to protect the future of the garden, he must constantly be on the alert for anything that might cause concern.

The average person who visits the garden of "life" does not sense the responsibility to make sure that it remains pristine and beautiful, nor does he voice concern about those inhabitants who act inappropriately. He is here to enjoy - for himself - not to be concerned about others. Not so the gadol, who senses that his function extends beyond visiting rights. He is like the gardener who must ensure the continued beauty and health of the garden. When he notices a tree that is not growing properly, he attends to it. When he notices a flower that is wilting, he quickly fertilizes and waters it. He weeds and waters the grass that should be greener. He addresses every aspect of the garden, so that it continues to be verdant and fruitful.

Rav Schlessinger suggests that this is why the Navi concludes his rebuke with the pasuk, "Then I will return your Judges as in earliest times, and your counselors as at first. After that you shall be called City of Righteousness, Faithful City." (Yeshaya 1:26)

The prophet prays for the day in which there will be more judges who reprove with sincerity and integrity. This communal sense of responsibility enhances people's relationships and elevates Klal Yisrael's spiritual plateau. The Talmud in Shabbos 119 teaches, "Why was Yerushalayim destroyed? Because they did not rebuke each other." Reproach catalyzes improvement in observance and ethical character. Once this takes place, the perfection that has been eluding us for so long will finally occur. At times, the most positive attitude is manifest by he who seeks out negativity - and corrects it.

A true friend will not shy away from subtly pointing out his friend's failings. This mission must be executed with sincerity, love and respect. Indeed, if one can get by without rebuking altogether, it would be more advisable. At times, it is better to close one's eyes and not see. The Pele Yoetz writes, "At times one should make himself like he does not hear and does not see, or he should acquiesce to the other's will to prevent a negative reaction." Do not look for trouble. If you find it, however, do not ignore it.

When one is compelled to offer words of admonishment, it should be couched with dignity, always making sure not to destroy the self-esteem of the individual he is rebuking. Often when someone who is already dealing with serious issues is rebuked in a negative manner, whatever is left of his self esteem descends to even lower pits of depression. This will only serve as a reason for him to continue along on his path of deviation from a life of Torah.

The Shalah HaKadosh interprets the pasuk in Mishlei 9:8, "Do not rebuke a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you," in the following manner. Do not rebuke a person by calling him a letz or any other derogatory term, in that it will only alienate him from you. Rather, tell him that he is a chacham, wise, and intelligent man, so that he will feel close to you and love you. Praise him and subtly inject some of the criticism in between words of praise. Talk to him with respect; elevate him and encourage him to continue along a path of positive service, reparation and return. By denigrating him, we only put him off.

Nobody is perfect. Everybody has some sort of deficiency. When we focus only on the individual's negative traits and deficiencies, our rebuke can

backfire. The sinner will say, "I am so bad; I am so far gone, why bother turning around? I am surely not going to make it." Instead of repenting, he quite possibly will deteriorate even more. A rav of an average sized community in Poland once came to the Chafetz Chaim and complained about his inability to inspire his congregation to increase their level of shemiras Shabbos, Shabbos observance. One derashah, lecture, after another did not seem to effect any positive change in their behavior. The Chafetz Chaim asked him, "How do you speak to them?" "Oh Rebbe," he replied, "I lash into them with fire and brimstone. I scream and speak dramatically and passionately. I certainly get their attention. No one sleeps through my derashah."

Hearing this, the Chafetz Chaim asked, "Do you scream when you put on your Tefillin? Surely not. The mitzvah of tochachah, rebuke, is no different than the mitzvah of Tefillin. It is carried out with patience, relaxed, with devotion and awe - not by screaming."

Sometimes, the lack of rebuke - or a smile rendered precipitously - at a moment when one expects to be admonished can create a positive mood, which facilitates the ultimate communication. An Israeli cabdriver who recently became a baal teshuvah, returnee to mitzvah observance, revealed what had catalyzed his return. He was driving a group of Arabs on Shabbos through the streets of Yerushalayim. As he slowed down for a light, an obviously observant Jew dressed in Shabbos finery and wearing his Tallis walked by the cab. The Jew looked at him with a big smile and, in a gentle voice, said, "Shabbat Shalom." That is it. Just a simple Gut Shabbos couched with a smile of brotherly love. It penetrated years of uncertainty, years of animus, years of fear. When the cab driver dropped off his fares, he decided to park his cab and call it a day. He was no longer driving on Shabbos. Shortly thereafter, he became fully observant. All because of a smile. He expected to be called, "Sheigatz!" and, instead, he received a smile and Gut Shabbos. It saved his life. We should remember this story the next time we see one of our misguided brethren. Perhaps, our attitude might change.

Last, one Shabbos in Yeshivas Ateres Yisrael, Rebbetzin Ezrachi noticed a student who "stole" a container of milk. This bothered her greatly. Her husband, the Rosh Yeshiva, Horav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, was away for Shabbos. She decided to go to the Mashgiach, her father, the venerable Horav Meir Chodosh, zl. "As the ethical supervisor of these yeshiva students, I implore you to censure him for stealing the milk," she said to her father. The Mashgiach listened and said, "Go speak to your husband." "My husband is not in town," she countered. Once again she demanded that her father castigate this student for stealing.

The Mashgiach finally told her to sit down, so that he could explain his reluctance of criticizing the student - now. "If I will speak to him now, I might gain a few containers of milk that will not be pilfered, but I might lose a student with enormous potential. My function is to teach and guide him not to succumb to his desires, not to fall prey to his yetzer hora, evil inclination. Chastising him is not the correct way to bring him to this goal."

#### **Your G-d was with you; you did not lack a thing. (2:7)**

The Torah admonishes Klal Yisrael not to act like ingrates, but rather to acknowledge and appreciate all of the abundance that Hashem has granted them. Unwarranted complaining is reprehensible. It is especially loathsome when one ignores all of the wonderful gifts that have been bestowed on him and instead focuses on the small inconveniences. In Bamidbar 11:7, Klal Yisrael complains about the "food," the manna they are receiving. Rather than thank Hashem for all of the good, for a food which provides them with total nourishment and any taste they could fathom, they complain. Hashem "said" to the nations of the world, "See about what my children complain!" In other words, Hashem announces to the world community the ingratitude of His children. This is not a common statement, and it is not often found in Torah literature. When people, however, do not appreciate what they receive from Hashem, it becomes the basis for public criticism. Horav Avraham Pam, zl, adds that it is quite possible that each and every one of us who does not properly acknowledge Hashem's beneficence deserves His punishment. We have become so spoiled with His benevolence that we no longer properly acknowledge it.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites a number of instances which are examples of this type of self-centered behavior. A young man came to Rav Zilberstein to complain about his wife. It seems that every day when he would return home, the floor would be littered with various toys and children's clothing. He is extremely fastidious and, therefore, the mess bothers him. What should he do? Rav Zilberstein told him that he would have been among the ingrates who complained about the manna. He should realize that the mess is caused by his children who are a blessing from Hashem. Let him enter a home where the people have not been blessed with children, and he will not encounter a mess! He should first appreciate his gift before he complains about some of its fringe "benefits." Another fellow complained that his wife, who supposedly had an incredible reputation prior to their marriage, was constantly putting him down. By listening to the entire story with an astute ear, Rav Zilberstein noted that the husband, who also had been touted as an exceptional young man, both academically and ethically, was himself not so perfect. The rav pointed out to the young man that a number of men his age have not yet been blessed with a mate. Perhaps his complaint was premature. If he would appreciate his wife more, she would reciprocate with greater deference.

This attitude is prevalent wherever we lose sight of the positive forces in our lives. Parents do so much for their children. Do we acknowledge what they do, and what they are giving up to act accordingly? Hashem said, "See about what my children complain!" Let us learn to appreciate our gifts and not complain about trivialities.

#### **Va'ani Tefillah**

##### **Keil nekamos Hashem. O G-d of vengeance, Hashem.**

The fact that vengeance is placed between the Names of Hashem is a clear indication of the significance and necessity of this attribute. Furthermore, it demonstrates that it is an attribute of the same caliber as the other attributes included herein. Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, explains that the two Names describing G-d, Keil and Hashem, aptly define His role in taking vengeance against those who warrant it. The name Keil describes Hashem's awesome power to pay retribution. No sinner can escape his due, because it comes from Hashem, a name which denotes that "He will be for He will be," meaning He will always be around; nothing will be forgotten, regardless of how much time elapses, before the judgment is executed. It may occur in this world - or it may wait until the next - but one can be certain that it will be executed.

Furthermore, vengeance is a way of demonstrating to the world that there is a G-d. This is especially true when a person observes punishment being carried out middah k'neged middah, measure for measure. When recompense is visited upon the wicked in the same manner as their sins have been committed, a person sees clearly that this world is not hefker, ownerless.

The wicked are referred to here as geim, arrogant, because arrogance is their primary characteristic. The term also emphasizes our joy in seeing their downfall. They, who thought they were omnipotent, now see for themselves that their power was but a figment of their imagination, a dream transformed into a nightmare.

"Tov Shem MeShemen Tov..." v'keser shem tov oleh al gevihen

li'n R' Yaakov Zev ben Yehudah Aryeh z'l JACK FOGEL OB" M niftar 7 Av 5755  
By his wife, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren Mrs. Jeanne Fogel  
Rabbi Yudie & Chaya Sarah Fogel, Nussie & Esther Fogel, Shalom & Ettie Fogel,  
Yosie & Bryndie Fogel, Rabbi Dovid & Liz Jenkins, Rabbi Yitzie & Bryndie Fogel,  
Rabbi Avi & Suri Pearl and their families

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#### **RavFrاند List - Parshas Devarim**

##### **Children are a Gift**

*"May God, the Lord of your fathers, add a thousandfold more like you and bless you, as He spoke to you." (Devarim 1:11)*

The Jewish people, Rashi informs us, were not very happy with the blessing Moshe gave them. "May God, the Lord of your fathers," he had said, "add a thousandfold more like you and bless you as He spoke to you."

"Only that and no more?" the people responded. "Is that the full extent of your blessing? Hashem blessed us (Bereishis 32:13) to be 'like the dust of the earth that is too numerous to count.'"

"You will surely get the blessing Hashem gave you," Moshe replied. "This is just my own personal blessing to you."

What exactly was Moshe's reply? What additional benefit would the Jewish people derive from his blessing of a thousandfold increase if they were already receiving Hashem's blessing of virtually limitless increase?

The Chasam Sofer explains that Moshe was testing them. Why did they want children? Was it because children were useful, because they help carry the household burden, provide companionship and are a source of security in old age? Or is it because each child is a spark of the Divine, a priceless gift from Heaven, a piece of the World to Come?

So Moshe gave the Jewish people a test. He blessed them with a "thousandfold" increase in their population. If they had wanted children for their usefulness alone, they would have said, "Thank you, but that's enough already! A thousandfold will suit our purposes just fine. We have no use for any more right now." But that was not what they said. They wanted more children. They wanted children "too numerous to count." Obviously, they were not thinking about their own material and emotional needs, but about the transcendent blessing that each child represents, and so, they proved themselves worthy of Hashem's blessing.

Hundreds of years earlier, these two conflicting attitudes toward children had already become an issue. Yaakov and Eisav had made a division. Eisav was to take this world, and Yaakov was to take the World to Come. When Yaakov came back from Aram, Eisav welcomed him at the head of an army four hundred men strong. In the tense early minutes of the confrontation, Eisav noticed Yaakov's many children.

"Who are these children?" Eisav asked.

"These are the children," Yaakov replied, "that Hashem graciously gave to your servant."

The Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer expands the dialogue between Yaakov and Eisav and reveals the underlying argument.

"What are you doing with all these children?" Eisav asked. "I thought we made a division, that I would take this world and you would take the World to Come. So why do you have so many children? What do children have to do with the World to Come? Children are a boon in this world!"

"Not so," Yaakov responded. "Children are sparks of the Divine. The opportunity to raise a child, to develop a Divine soul to the point where it can enter the World to Come, is a privilege of the highest spiritual worth. That is why I have children."

Yaakov wants children for their own sake, but Eisav views them as an asset in this world. Children are an extra pair of hands on the farm. They can milk the cows and help with many other chores that need to be done in agrarian societies.

Modern man has progressed beyond agrarian life. He has moved off the farm and does not have such a need for children anymore. In fact, he has made a startling discovery. Children are a tremendous burden. They are expensive, time consuming and exasperating. Who needs children?

But what about companionship? Loneliness? No problem. Modern man can get a dog. Dogs are wonderful. Instead of coming home to a house full of clamoring, demanding, frustrating children, he can come home to an adoring, tail-wagging dog who will run to bring him his slippers and newspaper. So why does he need children? This is the attitude of Eisav adapted to modern times. Yaakov, on the other hand, understands that the purpose of children is not for enjoying this world or for making our lives easier. Each child represents a spiritual mission, a spark of the Divine entrusted to our care and our guidance, an opportunity to fulfill Hashem's desire to have this soul brought to the World to Come.

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## h a a r e t z

### Portion of the Week / Envy is enough to warrant a mourner's chant

By Benjamin Lau

This Sabbath we will be reading Parashat Devarim, the Torah portion that is always followed by a haftarah from Isaiah and which is read before the

week when the fast of Tisha B'Av falls. The Torah portion, haftarah and the Book of Lamentations, read on Tisha B'Av, share a common feature: They all contain the word "eikha" (how): "How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?" (Deuteronomy 1:12); "How is the faithful city become a harlot!" (Isaiah 1:21); and "How doth the city sit solitary ..."; "How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger ..."; How is the gold become dim!" (Lamentations 1:1, 2:1, 4:1).

The midrashic commentary accompanying Lamentations refers to this linking word: "Three individuals prophesied using the word eikah: Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Rabbi Levy stated: 'This is like the story of a matron who had three escorts. One of them saw her in her period of serenity; the second in her period of rash behavior; and the third in her period of degradation. Similarly, Moses, seeing Israel in its glory and in its period of serenity, asked "How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance ...?"; Isaiah, seeing Israel in its period of rash behavior, exclaimed, "How is the faithful city become a harlot!"; and Jeremiah, seeing Israel in its period of degradation, lamented "How doth the city sit solitary ..." (Lamentations Rabbah, section 1).

Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of the last Judean kings, in the period preceding the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem (sixth century B.C.E.). He observed the performance of a corrupt regime alienated from the people, a fragmented Jewish nation in a period of humiliation, and a northern empire pouncing like a bird of prey on a carcass and destroying the last vestiges of Jewish sovereignty. The picture of the remnant of the Jewish people that survived in Jerusalem after the First Temple's destruction is horrifying.

Jeremiah's elegy is spontaneous; Isaiah's is more complicated. He prophesied in the era following the Assyrian empire's exile of the 10 tribes from the Holy Land, witnessed Sennacherib's military campaign there (701 B.C.E.), and was privy to the soul-searching of King Hezekiah, as he tried to grapple with a political dilemma - how to relate to the wars of the northern and southern kingdoms. With the words, "And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard" (Isa. 1:8), Isaiah depicts Judah after Assyria had rendered the Land of Israel - with the sole exception of Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity - Judenrein.

The national mood during the Assyrian kings' military campaigns is not encouraging and is essentially "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." The Jews focus on the present because they can see no future. With the nation faced with an ugly reality, the seemingly easiest solution is hedonism. Isaiah describes his compatriots in Jerusalem holding rooftop parties while desperate soldiers prowl the city's walls.

In his final blessing to his children, Jacob the patriarch first addressed his eldest, Reuben, describing him as a rash individual: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel" (Genesis 49:4). Similarly, Isaiah depicts the Jews during the era of Sennacherib as reckless, and the verses he utters express the problem of a corrupt regime in a period characterized by a total lack of planning and absolute despair. Everyone is interested in grabbing as much as possible, while trampling on society's weaker members. Isaiah's barbs of criticism are aimed primarily at the nation's corrupt leaders: "How is the faithful city become a harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: Every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them" (Isa. 1:21-23).

In this period of rash behavior, prostitution is evident everywhere in Jerusalem's streets, and immorality is found in every social stratum - an unreliable banking system, commerce permeated with deception, a tyrannical self-centered regime, and, most shameful of all, a judicial system rotten to the core: "They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." Furthermore, the prophet is painfully aware that the nation faces numerous security problems and that its foreign relations are in a sorry state. With all these dangers, however, what could ultimately doom Israel in this situation is a lack of inner strength. In his elegy, Isaiah laments the fact that a model society characterized by honesty and integrity has been replaced by social and moral corruption.

The third elegy is uttered by Moses in this week's portion. According to midrashic literature, Moses delivers his elegy in the midst of the period of his nation's serenity. This is bizarre. As it completes its journey through the desert, Israel has no external enemies, no dangers along the way, and no economic concerns - it is a virtual utopia of peace and security. Yet, instead of singing a song of praise, Moses delivers an elegy! And his words reflect a society rife with conflicts: "How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?" According to Rashi, this verse describes the nation's behavior in its wanderings through the wilderness, with each phrase describing a different negative feature: troublesome behavior ("your cumbrance"), heretical beliefs ("your burden") and chronic complaining ("your strife").

We do not need a war to write an elegy about the nation. Even when life is "normal" and no external enemy exists, people can still do a lot of damage, looking at everything negatively. When he sees that no one has a good word to say about others, that the Jews he is leading are envious, incorrigible troublemakers, and doomsayers, Moses feels he must recite an elegy. Isaiah ends his mourning chant with an optimistic message: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment" (Isa. 1:27).

We will enter the week on which Tisha B'Av falls with pain and trepidation. The future of the Jewish nation, as it seeks to rebuild itself in the ancestral homeland, is in our hands. We can be worthy of the return of the Shekhinah (the divine presence) to Zion only if we open our hearts and dedicate ourselves to the improvement and development of Israeli society.

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## Rav Kook List

### Devarim: Moses Speaks!

#### The Salesman and the King

The Book of Deuteronomy consists mainly of Moses' farewell speeches, spoken to the Jewish people as they prepared to enter the Land of Israel. The eloquence, passion, and rhythm of Moses' discourses are breathtaking. And we cannot but wonder: is this the same person who claimed to be "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue" [Ex. 4:10]?

The Sages were not unaware of this anomaly. The Midrash [Devarim Rabbah 1:7] explains that eloquence is a relative matter, using the following parable to explain:

"This is like a man selling purple cloth, who announced, 'Here is purple for sale.' Hearing his voice, the king peeked out and called the salesman over.

"What are you selling?" asked the king.

"Nothing."

"But before I heard you say, 'Here is purple for sale,' and now you say, 'Nothing?'"

"Oh no!" exclaimed the salesman. "I am selling purple, but by your standards, it is nothing."

This same concept, the Midrash concludes, may be applied to Moses and his speaking abilities. When standing before God, Creator of faculties of speech, Moses announced, "I am not a man of words" [Ex. 4:10]. When it came to speaking to the Jewish people, however, the Torah records:

"These are the words that Moses spoke..."

#### Who May Be a Prophet?

In order to properly understand Moses' claim of inferior oratory skills, we need to first examine a basic question regarding the nature of prophets and prophecy.

In chapter 7 of Yesodei HaTorah, Maimonides describes those character traits and intellectual qualifications necessary to be a prophet. He then writes:

"One who has perfected himself in all of these traits and is in perfect health, when he enters the Pardes [i.e., he studies esoteric wisdom] and is drawn to those lofty and distant matters .. Immediately the prophetic spirit will come to him."

This description seems to indicate that prophecy is purely a function of one's moral and spiritual preparation. Once one has attained the necessary spiritual level, he automatically merits prophecy.

However, Maimonides later writes that those who strive to attain prophecy are called "the sons of prophets" [see 2 Kings 2:15]. "Even though they

direct their minds, it is possible that the Divine Presence will inspire them, and it is possible that it will not" [ibid. 7:5]. This second statement indicates that attaining prophecy is not dependent only upon one's initiative and efforts. Even those who have attained the appropriate spiritual level are not assured of receiving prophecy.

How can we reconcile these two statements?

#### Natural or Supernatural?

Many aspects of the spiritual realm corresponds to the ways of the physical world. We find that the physical world is governed on the whole by set laws of nature and physics; only on occasion does Divine providence require that the laws of nature be overridden. The same holds true for the hidden resources of the soul. There are set, general rules that govern their functions. But there are also situations that are beyond the natural faculties of the soul.

We may thus rephrase our question as follows: is prophecy a natural spiritual talent (for those who prepare themselves appropriately)? Or does it fall under the category of the supernatural, and is only a matter of Ratzon Hashem, God's will at that time to perfect the world by way of prophetic message?

#### Ruach HaKodesh and Nevu'ah

To resolve this dilemma, Rav Kook distinguished between two levels of prophecy. The first is an inner revelation in thought and mind, called Ruach HaKodesh. This is Divine knowledge attained naturally, a result of the soul's greatness and its concentration on lofty matters. This form of prophecy is a natural talent that God established in the soul in its initial formation.

There is, however, a second, more external level of prophecy. This is Nevu'ah, from the word "niv", meaning expression or utterance. Nevu'ah is the completion of the prophetic experience; prophecy goes beyond thought and is concretized in letters and words. This form of verbal prophecy is not a natural faculty of the soul. It reflects a miraculous connection between the spirit and the physical, the supernatural phenomenon of Divine Will commanding the prophet to relay a specific message to the world.

Now we may resolve the apparent contradiction in Maimonides' writings. When he wrote that the prophetic spirit will immediately come to him, Maimonides was referring to the prophetic knowledge of Ruach HaKodesh. >From his description, it is clear that he is speaking about prophecy of the mind: "His thoughts are constantly attuned to above; they are bound under God's Throne, to understand those holy and pure images, perceiving God's wisdom (in all aspects of creation)."

When, on the other hand, Maimonides referred to Nevu'ah, he wrote that even though the prophet directs his mind, the Divine Presence will not necessarily dwell upon him. This form of prophecy is dependent upon God's Will and not on the soul's natural talents.

#### Moses' Mistake

Now we can better understand Moses' claim that he was not "a man of words." Moses was certainly aware of his stature as a prophet. Maimonides teaches that a prophet "recognizes that he is no longer as he once was; but rather that he has been elevated above the level of other wise individuals." Moses was aware of his spiritual state - but only as one worthy of Ruach HaKodesh in prophetic thought. He assumed that the greater level of Nevu'ah would be similarly recognizable by one who merited such a level. Since Moses did not feel within himself this level of prophecy, he stated that he was not a "man of words" - i.e., one meriting verbal prophecy.

Moses' assumption, however, was flawed. Since the inner prophecy of thought is a natural talent of the soul and the result of the prophet's spiritual efforts, the prophet is aware that he merits Ruach HaKodesh. The external prophecy of Nevu'ah, on the other hand, is dependent upon Ratzon Hashem, according to the dictates of Divine providence at that time. While the first level is comparable to the laws of nature in the world, the second is like the supernatural miracles performed on special occasions. Thus it does not reflect any inner quality of the prophet's soul.

God's response to Moses is now clearer. "Who gave man a mouth? .. Who made him blind? Was it not I, the Lord?" [Ex. 4:11] The world has two sides, the natural and the supernatural. The mouth belongs to the natural,

whereas blindness is a special condition. Both, God explained, come from Me. Just as you attained the natural level of Ruach HaKodesh, so too it is My will that you will attain the supernatural level of Nevu'ah.

### **The Prophetic Nature of Devarim**

We are left with one last issue to resolve. Why is it that the Midrash only clarifies Moses' oratorical skills in the book of Deuteronomy? The answer to this question is to be found in the difference between the prophetic nature of Deuteronomy as opposed to the other books of Moses.

Regular Nevu'ah occurs like this: the prophets would first hear the Divine message; then the Divine Spirit would come to them and they would relate what they had heard. The prophecy of Moses, however, was totally different. The Shechinah would "speak through his throat," even as he spoke to the people. Moses was just a mouthpiece for the Divine Presence. As a result, the other books of the Pentateuch do not reflect Moses' oratory talents. Unlike other prophets, his speeches were not even a repetition of what he had heard. The book of Deuteronomy, on the other hand, is a reflection of Moses' talents in the same way that the prophetic books of other prophets reflect their personal talents.

Were it not for Deuteronomy, we could have taken Moses' claim at face value and understood that he was literally "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." But after reading the eloquent discourses of Devarim, we realize that Moses was in fact referring to his prophetic capabilities. Moses meant that he was unworthy of verbal Nevu'ah. As in the Midrashic parable, only with regard to the King was Moses "heavy of mouth."

[adapted from Otzarot HaRe'iyah vol. II pp. 131-133 (originally published in Itur Sofrim)] Comments and inquiries may be sent to: [RavKookList@gmail.com](mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com)

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## **YatedUSA Parshas Devorim 5 Av 5767**

### **Halacha Talk**

**by Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff**

When Moshiach Comes

Shimon asked me recently what brachos we will recite when Moshiach comes and when we will recite them. I must admit that, I never heard this shaylah before, although I did discover two short responsa on the subject, both dealing only with certain aspects of the subject.

Subsequently, my son showed me a pamphlet that included a list of brachos we will recite upon the auspicious occasion. However, the list included errors and was incomplete. Hopefully this article will prepare us better for the occasion we daven for three times a day, and will itself hasten the redemption.

Before discussing the shaylah, we must first clarify an important question, to which a surprising number of Jewish people do not know the answer:

Who is Moshiach and what will he accomplish?

Moshiach is a Torah scholar descended from Dovid Hamelech who will reestablish the halachic Jewish monarchy in Eretz Yisroel and influence the entire Jewish people to meticulously observe halacha to the finest detail (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim, Chap. 11). He will be wiser than his ancestor Shlomo Hamelech, he will be a prophet almost as great as Moshe Rabbeinu, he will teach the entire people how to serve Hashem, and his advice will be sought by all the nations of the world (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 9:2).

He will gather together the Jews who are presently scattered at all ends of the world, expand Jewish territory more than ever before, and rebuild the Beis Hamikdash. (This follows the approach of the Rambam, Hilchos Melachim, Chap. 11. There is a dispute as to whether the third Beis Hamikdash will be built under Moshiach's supervision or whether it will descend from Shamayim. See Rashi, Sukkah 41a; Yerushalmi, Maaser Sheini 5:2, and Melech Shlomo, ad loc. There is also a dispute regarding whether the ingathering of the exiles will be performed by Moshiach or immediately prior to his arrival. We will find out for certain when the events unfold.) After he establishes his dominion, there will be no more wars, famine, jealousy, or competition, as the entire world will be filled with only one desire: to know Hashem and draw close to Him (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim, Chap. 12).

The fact that Moshiach is both the political leader of Klal Yisroel and a leading talmid chacham caused Rav Shmuel Hominer, a great tzaddik and talmid chacham of the previous generation, to ask Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach the following interesting shaylah, which I paraphrase:

"When we merit meeting Moshiach, we will be required to recite four brachos to praise Hashem upon the occasion: (1) Chacham ha'razim, The wise One who knows all secrets (which I will explain shortly); (2) Shechalak mei'chochmaso lirei'av, Who bestowed of His wisdom to those who fear Him; (3) Shechalak mikevodo lirei'av, Who bestowed of His honor to those who fear Him; and (4) Shehechiyanu."

Rav Hominer then proceeded to ask whether the two brachos both beginning Shechalak should be recited separately or combined into one bracha, Shechalak mei'chochmaso umikevodo lirei'av, Who bestowed of His wisdom and honor to those who fear Him. Let me explain his question. Chazal instituted that one who sees a Jewish king recites the bracha, Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam shechalak mi'kevodo lirei'av, that Hashem bestowed of His honor to those who fear Him; and a different but similar bracha when seeing a tremendous talmid chacham, Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam shechalak mei'chochmaso lirei'av, that He bestowed of His wisdom to those who fear Him (Brachos 58a).

Chazal instituted the recital of similar brachos when one sees a non-Jewish king, Shenasan mikevodo lebasar vadam, that Hashem gave honor to humans; and one when seeing a gentile scholar, Shenasan mei'chochmaso lebasar vadam, that Hashem gave wisdom to humans (Brachos 58a; Tur and Shulchan Aruch 224; cf., Rambam, Hilchos Brachos 10:11, who records a different text to these brachos.)

(Note that the brachos recited over a Jewish king or scholar use the word shechalak whereas the brachos recited over gentiles use the word shenasan. The word shechalak implies that the recipient of this power or wisdom recognizes that they are gifts received from Hashem and that Hashem retains total control over them [Avudraham, quoted by Beis Yosef, Orach Chaim 224]. However, the gentile king or scholar views these Divine gifts as his own accomplishments and does not recognize Hashem's ongoing involvement in his success.)

Since Moshiach will be both a king and a Torah scholar, Rav Hominer assumed that someone meeting him should recite both brachos. However, Rav Hominer queried whether these two similar brachos are combined into one bracha, Shechalak mei'chochmaso umikevodo lirei'av, that Hashem bestowed of His wisdom and honor to those who fear Him.

Rav Shlomo Zalman replied that we do not combine these two brachos, even when seeing a Jewish king who is also a talmid chacham (Minchas Shlomo 1:91:27). He points out that brachos are generally kept separate even when the themes are similar. As Rav Shlomo Zalman points out, an earlier author, the Teshuvah Mei'Ahavah (2:237), discussed this same shaylah in the eighteenth century and reached the same conclusion.

It is noteworthy that several poskim contend that we no longer recite the bracha Shechalak mei'chochmaso lirei'av upon seeing a noteworthy talmid chacham, maintaining that our generations no longer possess Torah scholars of the stature required to recite this bracha. (This approach is quoted by Shu"t Teshuvah Mei'Ahavah 2:237; Ben Ish Chai, Parshas Eikev 1:13, and Aruch Hashulchan 224:6, whereas Chayei Adam 63:8; Kaf Hachaim 224:18; and Shu"t Shevet Halevi 10:13 rule that we do recite this bracha today. Several anecdotes are recorded about great talmidei chachamim who recited the bracha upon seeing gedolim such as the Rogatchover Gaon, the Chazon Ish, the Brisker Rav, and Rav Gustman. See, for example, Piskei Teshuvos, Chap. 224 footnote #17.) Nevertheless, both Rav Hominer and Rav Shlomo Zalman assumed that we will recite this bracha upon witnessing Moshiach, either because they held that we do recite this bracha today, or the more probable reason being that Moshiach will clearly be a scholar of this league.

### **BARUCH CHACHAM HA'RAZIM — KNOWER OF SECRETS**

In the above-quoted correspondence with Rav Auerbach, Rav Hominer mentioned that we will recite two other brachos when greeting Moshiach: Baruch chacham ha'razim and Shehechiyanu. What is the bracha of Baruch chacham ha'razim?

The Gemara (Brachos 58a) records that someone who witnesses 600,000 Jews gathered together recites Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam chacham ha'razim, the wise One who knows all secrets (Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 224:5). This bracha praises Hashem for creating such a huge multitude of people, each with his own unique personality and physical appearance. (The Gemara records a different bracha to recite when observing a similarly-sized large throng of gentiles.) The wording of the bracha notes that only Hashem knows the secrets that each of these people thinks (Rashi).

Rav Hominer pointed out that since the entire Jewish people will surround Moshiach, there will be no doubt at least 600,000 Jews together to enable saying this bracha. Note, however, that we will recite this bracha upon seeing the huge crowd, and not recite the other two brachos until we actually see Moshiach.

#### SHEHECHIYANU

The fourth bracha mentioned by Rav Hominer is Shehechyanu, based on the halacha that if one sees a close friend whom one has not seen for thirty days, he recites Shehechyanu because of his excitement (Brachos 58b and Tosafos, ad loc.). Certainly, seeing Moshiach for the first time will generate more excitement than seeing a close friend that one has not seen for thirty days! (Cf., Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 225:2.)

#### SHEHECHIYANU OR HATOV VEHAMEITIV?

I raise the following query: Should we recite Shehechyanu or Hatov vehameitiv (He who is good and brings benefit) upon seeing Moshiach?

The Mishna teaches, "Upon hearing good tidings, one recites Baruch ... hatov vehameitiv. One who builds a new house or purchases new items recites Baruch ... shehechyanu vikiyimanu vihigyanu lazeman hazeh" (Brachos 54a). When one hears good tidings that are beneficial only for him, he recites Shehechyanu; if others also benefit, he recites hatov vehameitiv (Brachos 59b; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 222:1). Similarly, when acquiring new appliances, one recites Hatov vehameitiv if other people benefit; if only one person benefits, as is usually the case when purchasing new clothes, then he or she recites Shehechyanu (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 223:3, 5).

So which bracha will we recite upon the coming of Moshiach — Shehechyanu or Hatov vehameitiv? After all, it is not just the excitement of seeing Moshiach, but the realization that he will change the entire world for the better that generates the excitement and bracha.

In my opinion, we will recite both Shehechyanu and Hatov vehameitiv, but not at the same time. We will certainly recite Hatov vehameitiv when we hear the wonderful tidings of Moshiach's arrival. After all, if one recites the bracha when hearing that one receives a bounty, how much more so for the gift of Moshiach's long-awaited arrival!

In addition, according to Rav Shmuel Hominer and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, one will recite Shehechyanu upon seeing Moshiach for the first time due to the personal pleasure of witnessing him.

Although this now completes the list of brachos mentioned by Rav Hominer, I believe at least one more bracha should be added to the list:

#### RETURNING THE WIDOW TO HER PROPERTY

The Gemara (Brachos 58b) instructs that someone who sees Jewish houses in Eretz Yisroel that have been restored after the Churban recites the bracha, Matziv gavul almana, "He who reestablishes a widow to her borders," referring to the restoration of the Jewish people to the Holy Land. Rashi explains that this Gemara applies to a period such as that of Bayis Sheini, when the Jews returned to Eretz Yisroel after the exile, and the Rif states that it refers specifically to the restoration of shuls and batei medrash. Obviously, we will recite this bracha the first time we see either the restored Beis Hamikdash or the batei medrash and shuls of a rebuilt Yerushalayim.

#### WHY DON'T WE RECITE THIS BRACHA NOW?

We do not recite this bracha until Moshiach arrives and we no longer need to worry about our enemies (Beis Yosef, Orach Chaim 224; Maharsha, Brachos 58b; Shu"t Har Tzvi #84; cf., Magen Avraham 224:8). However, as soon as Moshiach has accomplished his purpose, we will recite this bracha on every rebuilt shul and beis medrash we see in Eretz Yisroel. Thus, we might recite this bracha even before actually seeing Moshiach himself!

#### AN EARLIER TESHUVAH

Someone asked Rav Chaim Falagi, a great nineteenth-century posek who was the rav of Izmir, Turkey, the following shaylah, "When Moshiach redeems us, what bracha will we recite upon the redemption and in appreciation of Hashem's benefiting us?"

Since the teshuvah is fairly short, I am translating it:

"It appears that we should recite a bracha of Go'al Yisroel, 'That you redeemed us from this bitter exile,' similar to when we complete retelling the story of our Exodus on Pesach and recite, 'And we thank You and recite a new song on our redemption,' and we conclude with the bracha, 'He Who redeemed Israel.' Similarly, after the future redemption we will recite a similar bracha. We will also recite Shehechyanu for experiencing this wondrous time, since without question, this day will be established as a Yom Tov" (Shu"t Lev Chaim 2:42).

Recently, I saw someone rule that we will recite a bracha, Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam Go'el Yisroel as soon as Moshiach arrives. However, I believe this to be an incorrect understanding of Rav Chaim Falagi's teshuvah. Nowhere do Chazal record a bracha with the text Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam Go'el Yisroel, nor do they cite a bracha to be made when one is redeemed. Rather, what Rav Falagi contended is that the Sanhedrin of the Moshiach era will institute a celebration to commemorate the wondrous events that transpire, and will presumably institute the reciting of a bracha similar in structure to the bracha we recite immediately prior to drinking the second cup of wine at the Seder. In addition, the Sanhedrin will presumably make the day of Moshiach's arrival into a Yom Tov, which will be celebrated with the bracha of Shehechyanu, just as we recite this bracha to commemorate every Yom Tov.

#### SIX BRACHOS

We now have a total of six brachos to recite when Moshiach arrives: (1) Hatov vehameitiv, when we hear of his arrival; (2) Matziv gevul almana, each time we see a newly reconstructed shul or beis medrash, and when we see the Beis Hamikdash; (3) Chacham ha'razim upon seeing 600,000 Jews assembled; (4, 5, 6) When we actually see Moshiach, we will recite three brachos: Shechalak mei'chochmaso lirei'av, Shechalak mikevodo lirei'av, and Shehechyanu. In what order should we recite these last three brachos? Having resolved that we will recite two different brachos, Shechalak mei'chochmaso lirei'av and Shechalak mikevodo lirei'av, which of these brachos is recited first?

I believe that the following Gemara (Brachos 58b) demonstrates that Shehechyanu should be the last of this triad:

"Rav Pappa and Rav Huna the son of Rabbi Yehoshua were traveling when they met Rav Chanina the son of Rabbi Ikka. They told him, 'When we see you we recite two brachos, Asher chalak mei'chachmaso lirei'av and Shehechyanu.'" Thus we see that Shehechyanu is recited after the other brachos.

#### CAN'T SEE MOSHIACH?

Now a practical question:

What if you cannot actually see Moshiach because of the large throngs that are there, but you know that he is in front of you. Do you recite these brachos anyway?

The answer to this question is based on a question of the correct text to the following Gemara (Brachos 58a):

Paraphrased text #1: Rav Sheisheis, who was blind, joined others who went to see the king. When the king arrived, Rav Sheisheis began blessing the king.

Paraphrased text #2: Rav Sheisheis, who was blind, joined others who went to see the king. When the king arrived, Rav Sheisheis began reciting the blessing.

What is the difference between the two versions? According to the first version, Rav Sheisheis blessed the king, meaning he gave him an appropriate greeting, but presumably did not recite the bracha on seeing a king, since he could not see him. Thus, one may not recite these two brachos unless one sees a king or a talmid chacham, and it is insufficient to be aware of his presence. This is the approach followed by the Eliyahu Rabba (224:6).



According to the second version, Rav Sheisheis recited the bracha for seeing the king, although he could not and did not see him. Thus, someone may recite this bracha to Hashem for the honor that the king receives even though he does not actually see the king himself. This is the approach followed by Magen Avraham (224:6).

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we may recite a total of eight special brachos when Moshiach arrives, in the following order:

1. When we first hear from a reliable source the good news of Moshiach's arrival, we will recite Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam hatov vehameiteiv.

2. When we see the huge throngs of Jews assembled to greet him, which will no doubt number at least 600,000 people, one recites, "Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam chacham ha'razim."

3. When one sees the rebuilt Beis Hamikdash or rebuilt shuls or batei medrash, one recites, "Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam matziv gevul almana." Theoretically, one might recite this bracha before the bracha Chacham ha'razim, if one sees the rebuilt Beis Hamikdash before one sees the huge throngs.

4. When we actually see Moshiach, we will recite, "Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam shechalak mikevodo lirei'av."

5. Immediately after reciting this bracha, we will recite the bracha, "Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam shechalak mei'chachmaso lirei'av." According to some poskim, one may recite these last two brachos when aware that Moshiach is nearby, even if one cannot see him.

6. When one actually sees Moshiach, one should recite Shehechyanu.

7-8. According to the Lev Chaim, on the anniversary of Moshiach's arrival, we will again recite Shehechyanu to commemorate the date, and we will recite a long bracha mentioning some of the details of the miraculous events of his arrival. This bracha will close with the words, Baruch Atah Hashem Go'al Yisroel.

Now that we have completed our discussion and review of these halachos, let us daven hard that we soon have the opportunity to recite these brachos!

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### YatedUSA Parshas Devorim 5 Av 5767

#### Halacha Discussion

by Rabbi Daniel Neustadt

#### Shopping During The Nine Days

Question: Is it permitted to go shopping during the Nine Days?

Discussion: The first nine days of the month of Av, known as the Nine Days, is a period of time established by the Rabbis to mourn the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash. To make us feel the aveilus, there are certain activities which are prohibited during this period. Since the Talmud tells us that only one who has properly mourned the Temple's destruction will merit to see its rebuilding, it is important to become more knowledgeable about the exact nature of the prohibitions of the Nine Days. One of them, the injunction against "buying new items," is reviewed here.

There are two types of items which are forbidden to be bought during the Nine Days: 1) Items which the consumer buys to give him pleasure or joy (as opposed to items which the consumer needs for daily living). 2) Apparel (clothing). As each group has its own rules and regulations, we will discuss each one separately.

#### Items of Joy or Pleasure

In order to diminish the level of simchah during this sad time, the Rabbis forbade buying items that mainly serve to give the owner joy or pleasure. Thus it is forbidden, for example, to purchase silver dishes, jewelry, fancy china, home decor items, or a car that is used mainly for pleasure travel.<sup>1</sup> But it is permitted to purchase standard household items that are needed, even if they are major purchases such as an air conditioner, a set of dishes, a cell phone, a health-related appliance, or a car that is used mainly for business or every-day household needs.<sup>2</sup> [If the business item being bought would normally require the recital of shehechyanu, the shehechyanu is said after Tishah b'Av.]<sup>3</sup>

Only actual buying is prohibited — shopping without buying is permitted. Window or comparison shopping is permitted.<sup>4</sup> Returns are permitted. Exchanges may be prohibited.<sup>5</sup>

If delaying the purchase will cause a monetary loss, or if the item will not be available for purchase after Tishah b'Av, it is permitted to buy the item during the Nine Days.<sup>6</sup> If possible, it is recommended to merely put down a deposit and take delivery of the item after Tishah b'Av.<sup>7</sup>

It is permitted to buy items for the purpose of performing a mitzvah, e.g., buying tefillin or seforim that are needed at the time.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, a bachelor who is getting married after Tishah b'Av may shop during the Nine Days if need be.<sup>9</sup>

#### Shopping for Clothes

The second category of items that may not be purchased — or worn — during the Nine Days is clothing or shoes, even if they are intended for use after the Nine Days.<sup>10</sup> Both expensive and inexpensive items, even trivial articles of clothing such as a pair of socks, a belt, a yarmulke, or a kerchief, are included.<sup>11</sup> A new tallis or a tallis katan may also not be purchased.<sup>12</sup> Linen and towels are considered "clothing" and are prohibited to be purchased as well.<sup>13</sup>

In the following cases it is permitted to shop for clothing during the Nine Days:

- If one has no clean shirt for Shabbos, he may [buy and] wear a new shirt.<sup>14</sup>
- A bachelor who is getting married after Tishah b'Av may buy anything he needs during the Nine Days.<sup>15</sup>
- One who does not have appropriate shoes to wear on Tishah b'Av may buy them during the Nine Days.<sup>16</sup>
- Although it is permitted to wash clothing for infants, toddlers and small children who constantly soil their clothes,<sup>17</sup> one is allowed to purchase new baby's and children's clothes rather than do their laundry.<sup>18</sup>
- If delaying the purchase will cause a monetary loss, or if the item will not be available for purchase after Tishah b'Av, some poskim permit buying the item during the Nine Days,<sup>19</sup> while others are more stringent.<sup>20</sup> If a substantial loss is involved, a deposit should be made and delivery taken after Tishah b'Av.
- It is permitted to [buy and] wear new clothes for the purpose of a shidduch.<sup>21</sup>
- People in the clothing business may purchase stock during the Nine Days.<sup>22</sup>

The prohibition against shopping during the Nine Days begins with sunset of Rosh Chodesh Av and ends at midday of the tenth day of Av. When Tishah b'Av falls on a Thursday, it is permitted to shop for Shabbos needs on Thursday night.

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Question: Which types of clothing are included in the prohibition against wearing freshly laundered clothes in the Nine Days?

Discussion: Shulchan Aruch rules that all freshly laundered (or dry-cleaned) clothes and linens (such as towels, sheets and tablecloths), may not be worn or used during the Nine Days.<sup>23</sup> It has become customary, therefore, that freshly laundered clothes are worn for a short while<sup>24</sup> before the onset of the Nine Days, so that the clothes are no longer considered "freshly laundered."

Contemporary authorities debate whether or not garments that are constantly being changed because of perspiration — like socks and undergarments — must also be worn briefly before the Nine Days. Some poskim hold that they must,<sup>25</sup> while others hold that such garments are not included in the prohibition of wearing freshly laundered clothes and one need not prepare them before the Nine Days begin.<sup>26</sup> The widespread custom in the United States follows the second opinion.

#### (Footnotes)

1 O.C. 551:2, Mishnah Berurah 11 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 13; Aruch ha-Shulchan 551:20; Kaf ha-Chayim 551:21, 23; Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:80. See also Nitei Gavriel, pg. 51, quoting the Rav of Pappa.

2 See Koveitz Halachos L'yemei Bein Hametzarim, pg 125; Halichos v'Hanagos, pg. 5, quoting Harav Y.S. Elyashiv; Kol ha-Torah, vol. 56,

pg. 58; Teshuvos Vayevareich Dovid 1:69. See also Teshuvos Levushei Mordechai 3:185-4.  
 3 Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:80.  
 4 Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:84-1.  
 5 Since the shopper is getting a new item in exchange for the old one, it may be considered as if he is buying the item anew. If the new item requires a shehecheyanu, the exchange may definitely not take place during the Nine Days; see Moadei Yeshurun, pg. 152, note 31.  
 6 Pri Megadim 551:7; Mishnah Berurah 551:11,13; Kaf ha-Chayim 551:21, 23; Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:84-1.  
 7 Kinyan Torah 1:109-5.  
 8 Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:80.  
 9 Mishnah Berurah 551:46. Other poskim disagree with this leniency; see Kaf ha-Chayim 551:30, 33 and 101.  
 10 Rama, O.C. 551:7 and Mishnah Berurah 45 and 49.  
 11 Mishnah Berurah 551:45-46; Harav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Nechamas Yisrael 13:3.  
 12 Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:80.  
 13 Nitei Gavriel 31:9.  
 14 Beir Halachah 551:6, as explained by Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:80.  
 15 Mishnah Berurah 551:14 and 46. Other poskim disagree with this leniency; see Kaf ha-Chayim 551:30, 33 and 101.  
 16 Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:80.  
 17 Rama, O.C. 551:14.  
 18 Mishnas Yaakov (quoted in Piskei Teshuvos 551:27 and in Nechamas Yisrael 13:7). See Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 551, note 513, who suggests that buying might be preferable to doing laundry.  
 19 Kinyan Torah 1:109-5.  
 20 Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 551, note 509, who questions if it is permitted to buy apparel on sale during the Nine Days  
 21 Orchos Rabbeinu, vol.2, pg. 132, quoting Chazon Ish.  
 22 Mishnah Berurah 551:11.  
 23 O.C. 551:3.  
 24 There are several views — ranging from several days to several minutes — as to how long a garment should be worn in order for it be considered no longer fresh. In actual practice, the garment should be worn long enough so that it loses that special crispness and freshness that one associates with freshly laundered or dry cleaned clothes.  
 25 Kaf ha-Chayim 551:91; Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 2, pg. 130; Minchas Yitzchak 10:44; Harav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Nechamas Yisrael 19:7.  
 26 Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 389:6 (concerning shivah); Geshar ha-Chayim 21:10 (concerning shivah); Salmas Chayim 4:4; Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling, quoted in Rivevos Efrayim 1:377 and 3:340, Moadei Yeshurun, pg. 134 and Kitzur Hilchos Bein ha-Meitzarim, pg. 9); Kinyan Torah 1:109; mi-Beis Levi, vol. 13, pg. 26.

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**TALMUDIGEST :: Yevamot 79 - 85**  
**For the week ending 21 July 2007 / 6 Av 5767**  
**from Ohr Somayach | [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)**  
**by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

**INNATE OR ENDOWED? Yevamot 79a**

“There are three characteristics which distinguish the Jewish People - they are merciful, they are bashful and they are performers of acts of kindness.” This is how King David described his people to the Givonites who demanded the execution of seven sons of King Saul as revenge for their suffering at his hand.

“Only one who has these three characteristics,” he concluded, “is fit to attach himself to our people.”

Since the unreasonable demand of the Givonites demonstrated that they lacked these characteristics, David ruled that they would have the special status of netinim and would be limited in their marriage eligibility within the Jewish People.

Although the impression gained here is that all these characteristics are in the “genes” of the Jews, it is pointed out by Maharsha that this is not the case. It is true that G-d testified that the Patriarch Avraham would pass on to his posterity a legacy of lovingkindness (Bereishet 18:19) but the other

attributes were unique gifts of G-d to His chosen people. “He will endow you with a capacity for being merciful” (Devarim 13.18) was a special gift from G-d, as was the bashfulness that came along with the gift of Torah (Shmot 20:17).

**WHAT THE SAGES SAY**

“When it was seen that was done to appease the Givonite converts for the harm done to them, 150,000 non-Jews decided upon conversion to Judaism.” Rabbi Shimon ben Yehatzodok -Yevamot 79a

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**YatedUSA Parshas Devorim 5 Av 5767**

**A Powerful Metaphor, But Does it Work?**

**by Yonason Rosenblum**

“I believe with a perfect faith in the coming of Moshiach. And even though he tarries, I still await his arrival every day.” Those words form one of the 13 basic principles of faith of the Rambam. Yet, as I write barely a week before Tisha B’Av, I find myself worried that this Tisha B’Av may not be filled with festive rejoicing.

That glum thought was triggered by watching From the Ashes, a new offering from Aish HaTorah scheduled to be screened in Jewish communities around the world this coming Tisha B’Av. The documentary basically follows Rav Noach Weinberg, founder of Aish HaTorah, on a visit to the death camps in Poland, together with 60 Aish HaTorah rabbis, interspersed with various participants discussing the experience.

The central metaphor of the documentary - one that is pounded home relentlessly in various ways - is that there is a spiritual Holocaust facing the Jewish people today no less devastating in its implications for the Am Hashem than the physical extermination of six million Jews in the Holocaust. Those six million constituted approximately one-third of the Jewish nation. At least two-thirds of Jews today have little connection to the Jewish people, certainly not enough to prevent them from intermarrying.

For Reb Noach, the “spiritual Holocaust” is no metaphor; it is the driving force in his life. And he seeks to make it the driving force in the life of every Jew with whom he comes into contact.

Apathy and passivity were a too common response of American Jewry to the Holocaust. To mitigate the shame and guilt of that apathy, some claim that they did not know what was happening. Others live with the shame. Today, no one can claim that they do not know of the ravages of assimilation and intermarriage on the ranks of world Jewry. They are too well documented. From the Ashes urges our generation to act so that we do not have to live with the shame of our apathy.

The documentary uses the backdrop of the death camps to draw some powerful parallels. Reb Noach invites the rabbis accompanying him - most of whom are presumably former students - to contemplate in detail the determination of Nazis, ym”sh, to wipe out the Jewish people. They experimented with different means of murdering Jews until they came up with the gas chambers, in which they could murder up to 24,000 Jews a day in Auschwitz. Next they had to find a way to dispose of such a large number of bodies, and experimented with various different methods until they found the most efficient. So much planning, so much thought went into killing as many Jews as possible.

Should we not be willing to expend as much energy, invest as much time, experiment until we find the right solution, and, in general, show as much determination to save Jews, as the accursed Nazis showed to murder Jews, Rav Weinberg asks.

THE PREMISE OF THE COMPARISON between today’s losses to the Jewish people via assimilation and intermarriage to the Holocaust is familiar to all Torah Jews: spiritual alienation from Hashem is a form of death, and even more horrible than physical death. Chazal tell us that the Egyptians were only forbidden to enter into Klal Yisroel for three generations, while the Moabites were prohibited from entering forever; the former only tried to destroy our bodies while the latter tried to destroy our souls.

Despite the familiarity of the concept, the question remains: Does the metaphor of assimilation as a “spiritual Holocaust” work for us? From the

Ashes contains one scene of a 23-year-old Israeli young man, with a ponytail, breaking down in piteous sobbing in the death camps. And the film is filled with many such emotion-laden moments.

But does anyone, besides Reb Noach and few refined souls, weep in the same way upon reading the most recent statistics on intermarriage or learning of the latest deprivations of one or another of the so-called “streams” of Judaism, as they do upon visiting the death camps? And if the metaphor does not work for us at that emotional level, despite being solidly grounded in Chazal, why is that?

All of us possess bodies. When we read of the torments inflicted upon Jews on the way to the camps and after arrival - the fetid, overcrowded cattle cars, in which it was impossible to draw a breath of air, to sit or lie down, or to attend to the most basic human needs; the below subsistence diet of watery soup and a slice of bread; the backbreaking labor by undernourished, disease-ravaged Jews, day after day - we can try to imagine that suffering.

In the same way, we can place ourselves imaginatively in the place of mothers faced with the most unbearable choice that any human being could ever be forced to make - which child will you take with you - or ordered to pass a young child to an old woman destined for the gas chambers and keep on marching to the other line.

But can someone born to a frum family, educated in frum schools, imagine the life of someone who has never been exposed to tefillah, who has never even met a Jew with a real connection to Hakadosh Boruch Hu, who knows nothing of Torah learning or the sweetness of mitzvah observance? (Perhaps that is why Rav Weinberg decided early on in his mission that his most dedicated troops would be drawn from the baalei teshuvah themselves, from among those who have experienced a life without any connection to Hashem and a life filled with that connection.)

The truth is that most of us - even shomrei Torah u'mitzvos - are much more connected to our bodies than our neshamos. Part of the hiddenness of this world is that we are aware of every little ache and pain of our body, but largely oblivious to what is happening to our neshama.

Even further removed from us is the pain of Hakadosh Boruch Hu over His children who know nothing of Him, or the suffering of the Shechina b'Golusa. Reb Noach describes what would happen if someone ran up and asked to borrow a rope so that he could save our drowning son. How we would rush to get the rope. If so, how much more so should we expect that Hashem will give us what we need in order to save His children from spiritual oblivion. But how many of us really identify with Hashem's pain over His lost children to the point of resolving to work to lessen that pain?

I also suspect that Rav Weinberg underestimates the capacity of even the finest people to remain apathetic. His starting point is that if we knew of another Holocaust today, that all normal life would cease. We would drop everything else and devote ourselves fully to doing whatever we could to stop it. But I wonder.

Two years ago, almost to the day, 8,000 Jews were uprooted from their homes, their communities destroyed, their sources of parnassah taken away. Every once in a while, a new government study catalogues the suffering of those who were uprooted and details the impact on their lives. Sometimes we read the story; sometimes we skip it so as not to feel depressed. But how many of us have done anything to help our fellow Jews, or even gone to visit them to offer a bit of moral support? Do we even give them a thought from one month to the next?

And last of all, how many of us appreciate the extent to which the loss of millions of Jews is our personal loss. The Bais Hamikdosh, according to the Ramban, was a physical manifestation of the unity at Har Sinai when all 600,000 Jews received the Torah “ke'ish echad b'lev echad,” as “one man with one heart.” That unity was the precondition for the dwelling of the Shechinah among us. The loss of millions of Jewish souls, then, represents the amputation of a limb from the collective Jewish people, a loss of the unity upon which depends Hashem's once more dwelling in our midst. Our deadness to the tragedy, our tragedy is a measure of our distance from Sinai and from the Bais Hamikdosh; a measure of our inability to truly mourn the Churban.

So I don't expect many of those who view From the Ashes this Tisha B'Av to fully grasp the metaphor, to break down sobbing the way the secular

Israeli broke down at Auschwitz. But maybe we can at least shed a tear over our own deadness, which is in the end a measure of our own lack of yearning for the unity of the Jewish people and the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdosh, bimeheirah b'yomeinu

**Please address all comments and requests to  
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