

Living Jewish



Tell your Children

In Defense of Elijah

Rabbi Moshe Alsheich was the head of a large yeshiva in 16th century Tsfat. He had received rabbinical ordination from Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the *Shulchan Aruch* [Code of Jewish Law]. He was a wealthy and extremely charitable man, in addition to being a great Torah scholar.



Moshe Braun, moshebraun.com

One Saturday night after Shabbat departed, as he was passing by the home of a certain poor man, he heard the man joyfully wish his wife, "a good week," and begin to sing the hymn "*Eliyahu HaNavi*" ["Elijah the Prophet"]. His wife, however, interrupted bitterly: "What are you so happy about? You know that the children have been hungry for many days and there is still no food in the house, no firewood either; so where is *Eliyahu HaNavi* in whose honor you sing?"

Upon his return home, R. Alsheich filled a sack with gold coins. He then covered his face and quietly retraced his steps, opened the door of the couple's house, and threw in the sack of money and ran off.

This anonymous generosity raised a great stir in heaven. The Heavenly Prosecuting Angel, however, said that it was nothing extraordinary, and that R. Alsheich should not be specially rewarded until he himself went down to test him.

The next Shabbat, a poor man suddenly appeared in the synagogue and announced: "I am hungry; who will feed me?" R. Alsheich immediately invited him for the Shabbat meal. The man devoured all the food that was set in front of him and then cried out that he was still hungry.

Further helpings also failed to satisfy him. R. Alsheich was so concerned that he served the man all the food that had been prepared for himself and his family for the entire Shabbat. The guest ate everything up at once and

again cried out that he was still hungry. R. Alsheich then ran over to some neighbors and took whatever food they could give him, but it was not enough to satisfy his ravenous guest.

So it continued all through the Shabbat: the poor man gluttonously consumed whatever he was given and then cried out that he was still hungry. In the end R. Alsheich said to him: "Today is Shabbat and there is nothing more I can do, but with G-d's help, after Shabbat I shall try to feed you until you are satisfied."

After Shabbat, he sent an ox to be slaughtered, but afterwards it was found to be *treif* ["ritually unfit"] and another ox had to be dispatched. This one also turned out to be unfit.

All told, thirty-nine oxen were slaughtered and all were found to be *treif*! This caused R. Alsheich great financial loss, but he kept insisting that he had to satisfy the hungry man. Finally, the fortieth ox was declared to be *kosher*, but before they could prepare it, the poor man disappeared.

This extraordinary demonstration of kindness caused another great commotion in the heavenly court. A decree was issued that one of the seventy faces of the Torah should be revealed to R. Alsheich and an angel was immediately dispatched to impart the knowledge to him.

At this time, Rabbi Yosef Caro was the

chief rabbi of Tsfat. He arrived at the synagogue the following Shabbat as the service was about to begin, but when he looked up at R. Alsheich's seat and saw that it was empty he ordered the congregation to wait, for it had been revealed to him that Rabbi Alsheich had become very great in Torah.

When it was time for the weekly discourse about the Reading of the Law which R. Yosef Caro always gave, he asked R. Alsheich to ascend to the pulpit and speak in his place. R. Alsheich refused at first, insisting he wasn't capable. Only when R. Yosef Caro finally ordered him to speak did he agree. R. Alsheich ascended the platform and delivered a discourse. Everyone was amazed by his profundity.

From that day on, the Alsheich *HaKodesh* (the "holy Alsheich," as he came to be called) was the one who delivered the weekly address each Shabbat, which became the basis for his famous "*Toras Moshe*" commentary on the Torah,

Adapted by Yrachmiel Tilles from several sources. Rabbi Tilles of Tsfat is a co-founder of ASCENT. His email list for stories is in its 23rd year. To join the list a/o his WhatsApp group for Saturday night Audio, Video and Zoom stories, go to AscentOfSafed.com or WhatsApp +972-526-770-137.

Shabbat Times

| | Candle Lighting | Motzei Shabbat |
|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Jerusalem | 7:06 | 8:21 |
| Tel Aviv | 7:23 | 8:23 |
| Haifa | 7:17 | 8:24 |
| Beer Sheva | 7:22 | 8:21 |
| New York | 8:00 | 9:05 |

Chabad Of Israel
 Rabbi Joseph I. Aronov
 Published by M.L.S. Kfar Chabad (03) 3731777
 Editor: Aharon Schmidt
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Shabbos Chazon

This week the Shabbos is given a special name, Shabbos Chazon, which means “the Shabbos of vision.” It refers to the *haftorah* read on this Shabbos, which begins: “The vision of Isaiah.”

Isaiah’s vision speaks of the retribution G-d will visit upon the Jewish people for their sins. Conversely, however, the name of this Shabbos has a positive connotation. As R. Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev would say: On the Shabbos of Vision, every Jew receives a vision of the Third Temple.

Severe Descent and Exalted Peek

Both of these interpretations relate to the fact that this *haftorah* was instituted to be read on the Shabbos preceding Tisha B’Av, the fast commemorating the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish people.

The traditional meaning focuses on the negative, the severe descent of our people into sin. For, as the prophet warns, Israel will be harshly punished for her grave transgressions.

The chassidic interpretation, by contrast, points to the redemption from that exile, alluding to a foretaste of the most exalted spiritual levels, a peek at the ultimate and

most inclusive revelation of G-dliness that there will ever be.

How can the two interpretations coexist? They are seemingly opposite.

Our Unique Nature

Such a paradox, however, reflects the unique nature of the Jewish people. Our nation is prone to extremes—whether we are at the highest peaks or the lowest depths, we simply are not ordinary.

Why? Because our people, as a whole and as individuals, share a connection with the essence of G-d.

The essence of G-d is not computable; it doesn’t fit on a graph. Instead, it defies all definitions and foreseeable determinations, making rules rather than conforming to them.

That essence was implanted in every one of us. Therefore we will be exceptional: at times sinking to the depths about which Isaiah spoke, and at times rising to the peaks that enable us to anticipate the revelations of the era of the redemption.

What is most unique is that the two extremes are interrelated. The descent leads to the ascent. G-d structured the challenges of exile to compel us to express our deepest spiritual potential. And just as He pre-

sented us with these challenges, He gave us the ability to overcome them.

True Growth

Our Sages describe exile with the analogy of sowing seeds. Before a seed can grow into a flowering plant, its exterior husk must utterly decompose. Similarly, for the G-dly core of the Jewish people to flourish, all the external dimensions of their personality must be stripped away.

In the analogue, the drastic descent that characterizes the exile wears away at our intellectual and emotional connection with G-d. Without gentleness or mercy, exile tears apart the husky shells of our personalities. Layer after layer of who we think we are and what we’ve been trained to be, what we would like to be, is peeled away.

Ultimately, what is left? The very essence of the soul, the point within our being that is an actual part of G-d. And when that essence is tapped, true growth begins.

When this pattern spreads from person to person, the Jewish people blossom. In doing so, they spread the awareness of G-dliness throughout the world, precipitating the dawning of the era of the redemption.

Reprinted from Keeping in Touch, Vol. 2, Sichos in English. From our Sages and Moshiaich Now! reprinted from www.LchaimWeekly.org - LYO / NYC

From our Sages

These are the words (Deut. 1:1)

The Midrash relates that G-d says of the Jewish people: “My children are like the honeybee—all that they toil to produce belongs to their keeper. The same way, all the mitzvot and good deeds performed by My children are done for the sake of their Father in Heaven.” We learn a spiritual lesson from the bee as well. A honeybee does not think of itself when it produces its honey; it does so only because of the wishes of its Creator. The same should apply to us as well. “I have only been created to serve my Master,” the Talmud states.

(the Rebbe)

How can I by myself alone bear your trouble, and your burden, and your strife? (Deut. 1:12)

Rashi comments: “And your burden”—this teaches that the Children of Israel were apikorsim (skeptics and heretics). Rabbi Nachman of Breslov used to say: The heaviest burden a man can endure is that of skepticism. The heart of the true believer is much lighter than that of the heretic, who is always weighed down by the yoke of his doubts.

Shabbat Chazon

This Shabbat is known as Shabbat Chazon, from the Hebrew word which means vision or prophecy. On this day, every Jew is shown a vision of the third Holy Temple from afar.

The situation is likened to the following: A father had a very expensive garment sewn for his son, who was too foolish to take proper care of his clothes. After the son tore the garment the first time, the father went out and had another sewn to replace it. The second time the boy acted irresponsibly and tore his clothes the father, much wiser by now, had another garment sewn, but decided not to give it to the son immediately.

From time to time he would allow the boy to catch a glimpse of the outfit, telling him that if he behaved properly, he would then be worthy of his father’s gift. The son longed for the garment and, in such a way, did the father train his son to improve his behavior and stay on the right path.

(Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev)

Yearning for Moshiaich

The tzaddik Reb Yitzchok of Radvil, having heard of the greatness of Reb Avrohom Hamaloch (the Maggid’s son), traveled to see him.

He arrived on Erev Tishah B’Av. That night, as everyone sat on the floor of the shul reading Eicha and mourning the churban (the destruction of the Temple), a bitter cry was suddenly heard. Reb Yitzchok turned and saw Reb Avrohom Hamaloch sitting with his head between his knees, weeping bitterly.

Long after everyone had gone, he continued watching Reb Avrohom who sat in the same position without moving. When the clock struck midnight, Reb Yitzchok retired for the night.

The following morning, Reb Yitzchok arrived early to shul and found the Maloch still mourning, a puddle of tears surrounding him, and from time to time, the Maloch would lift his head and ask in pain, “He’s still not here?...”

Yearning for Moshiaich and To Ask for Moshiaich reprinted from The Weekly Farbrengen by Merkaz Anash, on-line at TheWeeklyFarbrengen.com

Chassidus page

Seeing the Holy Temple

This Shabbos is called Chazon (vision), based on the opening passage of its haftora “Chazon Yeshayahu” (the name Yeshayahu implies yeshua—salvation).

At the farbrengen of Shabbos Devarim, 5742, the Rebbe quoted the famous teaching that the Mikdash (Temple) is shown to each Jew’s neshama on this Shabbos.

Some argue that although they know that each Jew’s neshama sees the Mikdash on Shabbos Chazon, physically they do not see it. And, although they see it spiritually, it does not affect them.

The Soul Sees

The verse in Daniel states: “I Daniel alone saw the sight, and those who were with me did not see, but a great fear fell upon them.”

The Gemara asks: being that they did not see, why were they afraid? And the Gemara answers that although they did not see, their neshama did. They were afraid because their own neshama had seen, not because Daniel had seen and told them of the sight.

The Baal Shem Tov explains a similar point to clarify a difficult passage of Mishna. The Mishna states that each day a bas kol (heavenly voice) emanates from Chorev bemoaning the abandonment of Torah. The purpose of a bas kol is that its message be heard. So, it seems, that a bas kol, which is not heard, is useless.

The Ba’al Shem Tov explains that although it is not heard physically it is heard by the Jew’s neshama.

Connecting with One’s Soul

The avoda (service) of a Jew is to connect to the source of his neshama, which sees the Mikdash. The source of the neshama is in the heavens; but reaching it is not as difficult as reaching the heavens itself.

Since the Mikdash is shown to each Jew, he must try to see it himself. Hashem gives strength for avodah—however, the avodah itself must be done by each Jew.

Daniel’s companions saw the sight themselves and did not hear about it from Daniel. So too, in that the Mikdash is shown to each Jew, he must strive to see the Mikdash himself. *Adapted from Derher*

Sudden Inspiration

There are times when a person gets a sudden inspiration such as, “I want to learn more Torah,” or “I want to daven with more concentration.” In Chassidic terminology this is referred to as an arousal from Above. Yet, where does this inspiration come from?

Chassidus explains that the heavenly voices the neshama hears can, at times, trickle down, breaking through the cloud of day to day routine, and fill the person with inspiration.

The vessel to hold this arousal from Above is a practical resolution, such as, to increase in Torah learning, charity, performance of mitzvos, etc. The arousal will then have a vessel wherein to reside and will have a lasting affect on the person.

To Ask For Moshiach

Reb Yaakov Krantz, the Dubno maggid, asked a classic question: “How is it possible that millions of Yidden, throughout the generations of exile, have davened, beseeched and cried to Hashem about the exile and rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash, yet they have not been answered? Doesn’t Hashem say, ‘Call to Me and I will answer?’”

He explained with an analogy: A son once disobeyed his father and was evicted from his home. The boy wandered from city to city and village to village, until he found a place to live in some remote town. Meanwhile, the father sat in his home, painfully yearning for his son, and waited to receive some message expressing remorse and a request to be welcomed back. But his son never made contact. He completely forgot about his father, whose pain grew sharper ...

One day, a merchant who had encountered the son met the father on one of his business trips and said: “I’m shocked that you haven’t had pity on your son. Have you closed the doors to teshuva?!”

The father did not hide his pain and replied, “You should know how deep is my heartache and how strongly I await his return, but unfortunately, I have never received any sign that he wants to come back.”

“If so,” declared the guest, “I am better than ten messengers! I will ask, in your son’s name, that you accept him as if he had never wronged you. Okay?”

“This is your mistake,” the father said sorrowfully. “I want my son to regret his actions and ask to be reaccepted, for then I will know that he has corrected his bad ways. You, however, have just come to do business, and not as a messenger sent from him.”

Reb Yaakov concluded: If, during davening, our focus would be on the exile of the Shechinah and the rebuilding of Yerushalayim, then surely our prayers would be granted. However, we daven primarily for our livelihood, health and forgiveness, and amongst these requests, we also ask for Moshiach...

Mishlei HaMaggid M’Dubno HaShalem

Moshiach Now

Shabbat During the Three Weeks

The three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B’Av are a time of sadness and mourning over the destruction of the Holy Temples. On Shabbat, however, we are forbidden to mourn. Even if Tisha B’Av falls on Shabbat the fast is postponed until the next day, and the day is spent as a day of joy. These Sabbaths are like the “cure which is sent before the illness,” the illness being the destruction which was to follow.

These Sabbaths also reveal to us the inner meaning of the exile, which is only a preparation for the final redemption, described as “a day which is entirely Shabbat.” When Moshiach comes and everything is revealed, the Jewish people will even thank G-d for their years in exile.

(the Rebbe)

Human Interest

Virtual Kotel Tour

The Rebbe urged that the Three Weeks should be a time of increased Torah study and giving of charity— in keeping with the verse, "Zion shall be redeemed by law, and her returnees by charity." Particularly, the Rebbe requested the study of those portions of Torah that deal with the building of the Holy Temple. It is taught that through this study, Hashem considers it as if the Temple is built.

Given the current challenges with the Coronavirus, The Western Wall Heritage Foundation is proud to present The Western Wall Tunnels 360



LIVE in the comfort of your own home. The Western Wall Tunnels were filmed using state-of-the-art technology that allows you to take a full tour of these Tunnels without leaving your house. It is a moving 3D tour with your own guide who will take you to see underground treasures that convey the fascinating history of the Jewish nation in Jerusalem.

The tour is suitable for groups or individuals. It combines film clips and unique illustrations alongside a "real" three-dimensional tour. You will even be able to ask questions and get personalized responses. You will go for a "walk" along the entire route of the Western Wall Tunnels; visit hidden underground spaces; stand opposite the Holy of Holies; and walk through a Hasmonean water aqueduct.

For more information and registrations: https://english.thekotel.org/western_wall_sites/360/

Cooking Tip of the Week

Parve burgers for the nine days. Cook 1/2 cup quinoa in 2 cups of water. Combine with 1 cup mashed chickpeas (drain and remove skins or use frozen precooked and mash), 1/2 c gluten free panko bread crumbs (or crushed cornflakes), 1/4 cup chopped onion, 1/4 tsp smoked paprika, 1/4 tsp coarse salt and 1/4 tsp black pepper. Mix together and form patties. Fry or bake.

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Halacha Corner – Tisha B'Av - Did I Break My Fast

The Halacha, brought down in Shulchan Oruch, is that if a person forgets that it is a fast day and eats, if they eat a Kezayis, they lose their fast. Similarly, if one drinks a Revi'is, they lose their fast. However, this Halacha only applies to a fast that a person took upon himself. When it comes to the regular fast days which Chazal designated, then the Halacha is that the particular day is the fast day, and therefore there is no concept of "losing the fast" with regard to eating afterwards, and one who forgot and ate or drank must nevertheless continue to fast throughout that day. Also, there is no need for such a person to fast an additional day as compensation (unless he wants to do so as a form of Kapara, an atonement).

Additionally, according to the Tzemach Tzedek, the measurement for which a person would be considered as breaking the fast if they ate on a designated fast day is not a Kezayis, but a Koiseves, the same measurement as on Yom Kippur, a measurement slightly larger than a Kezayis. The measurement for drinking would be Meloi Lugmov, a cheek-full.

The relevance of the measurements of Koiseves and Meloi Lugmov is with regard to whether a person who ate or drank such an amount can be counted in a Minyan, so that the Chazan would be able to say the Brocho of Aneinu.

Rav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, shlita, Mara D'asra and member of the Badatz of Crown Heights, 1 Minute Halacha, reprinted from crownheightsconnect.com

Farbrengen

Question: We had planned to visit my parents but since our car is in the shop we decided to take a train. My wife was going shopping with a friend and we agreed to meet at the train station at 4pm. She came 10 minutes late and we missed the train. This is just one example, but it happens a lot. She apologizes but it just happens again and again. I get frustrated and it leads to fights. We have been married 22 years and I think it is time she should do something about this. What do you think?

Answer: A 24 year old man suffered from anxiety and low self-confidence. His parents had a nasty divorce when he was between the ages of nine and ten. If not for the divorce, he believed he would not have these difficulties. On the one hand, it might be true that his issues were caused by the divorce. However, it is also true that regardless of the divorce, he would still have the same issues. Every thing is Divine Providence. Where we find ourselves is exactly where it has been ordained that we should be. Our challenges are part of our life's journey and growth.

It is common to blame the situation, i.e. wife, husband, children, etc. "If only they would stop being so difficult my life would be better!" But what if they will not change? Is one doomed to a life of frustration?

The Gemara (Brachos 5A) states that, "if one sees afflictions befalling him, he should examine his deeds" and repent. And Tanya explains, "he will find sins that require scouring by means of suffering. He will then clearly see G-d's great love..." (Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 22) In other words, Torah acknowledges that there will be challenges. The key is not to blame the situation, but react in a healthy and effective manner.

Hashem gives us the year's of our life to reach completion. We are a work in progress; in the midst of life's journey. In both marriage and parenting there are two simultaneous thrusts: 1. To view our spouse or child as perfect; 2. Accept that it is okay to make a mistake. While this might seem like a contradiction, it is not: *The fact that my spouse or child is in a process of growth is part and parcel of their perfection.*

Getting upset and reminding your wife to be on time hasn't helped. Try something new: See your wife as perfect while understanding that she is in a process of growth - as is each of us. Allow her to go at her pace. Not only will your marriage be closer but you will create an environment where change and growth can flourish.

Aharon Schmidt - marriage & individual coaching. Video and telephone sessions also available. For an appointment contact: coachingandcounseling1@gmail.com

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