



THANK YOU HASHEM

For Shabbos Kodesh!

Parshas Devarim

HaMeor Shebah

A Short Burst of Relevance

אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל-כל-ישראל...

These are the words that Moshe spoke to the entire Jewish nation...

CHODESH AV IS without question the darkest month in the Jewish calendar. From the negative report of the Meraglim, the destruction of both Batei Mikdash, and the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290 to the Spanish expulsion in 1490 and the deportation of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka death camp, Chodesh Av has historically been a month of great tragedy, suffering, and mourning for our holy nation. The common denominator between these tragedies is Hashem's concealment, His seeming silence in the face of humanity's descent into the abyss of cruelty and malevolence. We strain our ears for any sound from beyond, any semblance of a message or sign that Hashem has not forsaken us and that this is all somehow an expression of His great and undying love. But none appears to be

forthcoming. The Ishbitzer Rebbe teaches that while on the surface it may appear as Hashem has forsaken us in times of struggle and pain, He is always there - always present within the suffering, and forever sending forth healing words of comfort and fixing to the Jewish soul. The destruction of the Beis HaMikdash took place on the ninth day of Av - a number that, according to the holy Zohar, alludes to the very essence of life; the deepest and hiddenmost source of vitality. Indeed, as the Jews were exiled from their land through the clouds of smoke with the burning Beis HaMikdash behind them, the keruvim - representing Hashem and am Yisrael - were sharing the most intimate embrace. This, explains the tzaddik, is why we read parshas Devarim in the days leading up to Tisha B'Av. "Eleh hadevarim" - Hashem never stops speaking, never stops communicating with His precious children. The greatest holiness, represented by the "chashmal" seen in Yechezkel's vision, is expressed in "chash-mal", a speaking silence; the realization that Hashem will never abandon us, no matter how dark things may get and how absent He may seem. "Eileh hadevarim": Even in the month of Av, Hashem never stops looking us in the eyes and saying, "I love you." 🤴

Parsha Roundup

A 60-second Review

- 🤴 Moshe begins his repetition of the Torah before am Yisrael. He reviews the events that occurred and the laws given over the course of their forty-year journey, rebukes the people for their shortcomings, and enjoins them to keep the Torah and observe its commandments in Eretz Yisrael to which they will travel after his passing.
- 🤴 Moshe recalls his appointment of judges, the journey through the fearsome desert, and the episode of the spies.
- 🤴 He also recounts more recent events: the refusal of the nations of Moav and Ammon to allow am Yisrael to pass through their countries; the wars against Sichon and Og, and the settlement of their lands by Reuven, Gad, and half of Manashe.
- 🤴 Moshe delivers a message of empowerment and encouragement to his successor, Yehoshua, who will take the people into the Land and lead them in the battles for its conquest.

A Quick Mayseh

A Story to Warm the Heart

In the mid-20th century, the Brooklyn neighborhood of Brownsville boasted many shuls of various styles and flavors. One particular shul was led by a rav who, for an unknown reason, displayed open animosity toward the Chassidic Jews in the area - particularly Lubavitchers who were chassidim of the Rebbe Rayatz, Rebbe Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn. At every opportunity, he would deride the chassidim in the presence of his congregants, ridiculing their customs and belittling their venerable leader.

One day after maariv, the rav banged on the bimah for silence and addressed the congregation.

"I have something to say," he announced. "I was wrong about the Lubavitcher Rebbe and I want to apologize publicly for the way I've portrayed him in the past."

The congregants were shocked. "What could possibly be the reason for this sudden change of heart?"

The rav answered with the following. "As you know, I have an older brother with whom I share an extremely close relationship. A few months ago, he was diagnosed with a serious illness. He needed a large sum of money for specialized treatment and he reached out to me for help. I first thought about taking up a collection among the members of our shul, but the sum was too large and I knew you needed the money for your families. Instead, desperate to raise the sum, I placed a classified ad in the Morgen Journal with four words: "Ah Yid darf hilf" (a Jew needs help). Underneath, I wrote my phone number, and hoped for the best.

Friends, only one Jew responded to my message. Do you know who that Jew was? It was the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He called me up as soon as he had seen the message and offered to donate the full amount necessary for my brother's treatment.

This is the reason for my apology. Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak is a true leader, a true tzaddik. He didn't know who I was or whether I belonged to his chassidus. All he saw was that a Jew needed help and that was enough for him."

This week, let's try to look at the world with the eyes of the Rebbe Rayatz, seeking to help every Jew in need regardless of any external factor. We are all children of the same father! In the merit of this realization, may we merit the building of the Third Beis HaMikdash and the transformation of Tisha B'Av from a day of mourning to a day of ultimate rejoicing! 🤴

Tohameha

Tasting the Depth of Shabbos Kodesh

ON SHABBOS DAY, all the holy sparks extracted from the forces of lowliness and mundanity during the week are elevated to their source in the spiritual realms above. During the glorious daytime hours of Yom HaShabbos which, as we have learned, is related to the *sefirah* of *Tiferes*, Hashem glorifies Himself and takes pride (“*hispa’arus*”) in the awesome effect of am Yisrael’s Torah, *tefillah*, and mitzvah observance during the week. These holy sparks form a crown for Hashem. Indeed, the Chernovitzer reveals that the word “**B’Shabbos**”, “On Shabbos”, is numerically equal to the words, “**B’cha Espa’er**”, “In you (am Yisrael) I take pride.” On Shabbos day, Hashem’s joy over our devotion for Him filters down into every feeling Jewish heart, inspiring contentment, rejoicing, and peace of mind. As we mentioned last week, when a Jew says the words, “*Hallelu es Hashem min hashamayim*” on Shabbos morning, he should have this special intention in mind: in this moment, he is inviting all of creation to join him in greeting the King of kings and glorifying Him on His special day as He is crowned with the love, devotion, and yearning of am Yisrael embodied in their Torah study, prayer, and mitzvah observance throughout the week. As the *Klal* upon which all *pratim* depend, it is our responsibility to arouse every particle of physicality to the awareness of the awesome rectifications taking place on this awesome day so that they too may take part in the rejoicing of Hashem. 🕎

This section is adapted from the sefer “Sidduro Shel Shabbos” by R’ Chaim of Chernowitz zy”a (1760-1816)

P’nimiyus Ha’Halacha

The Inner Dimension of Jewish Law

IN THE DEVESTATING event that Moshiach does not come by then (surely, he will!) this coming Wednesday night/Thursday will mark the fast of Tisha B’Av. One of the activities prohibited on this solemn day is wearing leather shoes. (*Shulchan Aruch* 554:1) The *Mishnah Berurah* (554:30) writes that the prohibition is against wearing shoes, but only shoes made of leather are considered shoes. Therefore, shoes made of other materials are generally permitted. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *z”l* writes that even those who are lenient on Yom Kippur to wear non-leather shoes made of comfortable materials should try to minimize their comfort on Tisha B’Av. There are those - based on a ruling of Rashi that despite their being leather-free, wooden shoes are forbidden on Yom Kippur because of their comfortability - who hold that comfortable or supportive footwear such as crocs are forbidden as well. (Interestingly, the *Sefer HaMinhagim* brings that the Maharil’s allowance of a garment called “*zocken*” to be worn instead of going barefoot was considered an innovation - seemingly indicating that comfortability was indeed seen as a factor.) As always, one’s Rav should be consulted for all practical issues.

On a simple level, the prohibition against wearing leather/comfortable shoes is for the purpose of minimizing physical pleasure on this day of mourning. However, in his beautiful book, “The Soul of Jerusalem”, Rabbi Shlomo Katz records three deeper reasons for this prohibition taught by Reb Shlomo Carlebach *z”l*.

1. On Tisha B’Av, we are completely overcome by the brokenness of the world. We contemplate all the tragedies our nation has undergone throughout our history - all rooted in the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash - and the darkness still so prevalent throughout the globe. In this moment, we realize that it is all on us - it is all because we have yet to assume our proper role as a light unto the nations. Having failed to achieve peace between ourselves, we have been unable to bring peace to a shattered world. It is not a matter of right or wrong - on Tisha B’Av we feel as if even the

choicest of our deeds are lacking; if the Beis HaMikdash is not yet rebuilt, we have nothing at all. This, explains Reb Shlomo, is why we do not wear shoes on Tisha B’Av. In his inimitable words, “On Tisha b’Av, I take off my shoes. There is something about shoes. Imagine you walk into a fancy restaurant. You can wear a tie and a tuxedo and smell of perfume, but if you are also barefoot the manager of the restaurant will say, “Listen, brother, you have no shoes on. You’re nobody, you can’t come in.” Try walking into a bank without shoes. You can’t. They won’t let you in. There is something to it, take it or leave it. If you have no shoes on, you’re nobody. On Tisha b’Av, I’m a nobody.”

2. Everybody knows that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred. This level of hatred is a direct result of arrogance, pretentiousness, and sophistication. A heightened sense of self causes barriers to go up between one Jew and the next, and the unity founded upon a shared sense of collective purpose is shattered. Paupers, people who don’t even have enough money for shoes, don’t have any of this pretentiousness. In Reb Shlomo’s words, they don’t need to be “introduced”; they easily relate to one another with simplicity, understanding, and empathy. On Tisha B’Av, we take off our shoes because we want to be able to relate to one another on this level.

3. If a person is only standing in one place, he does not need shoes. Shoes are for walking, to protect one’s feet from filth and harm along the way. In Reb Shlomo’s words: “All year long, I think I’m walking in G-d’s way. I’m walking, so I need shoes. On Tisha b’Av, I realize that I haven’t been walking in G-d’s way at all. I’ve been standing there like a dope. I think I have grown up so much. But on Tisha b’Av, I realize I’m standing still. If I’m standing still, I don’t need shoes.”

May we merit to wear leather shoes this Tisha B’Av as we link arms and march toward the Beis HaMikdash in the rebuilt Yerushalayim!