

בס"ד

דברי תורה ד'צבי אליהו
DIVREI TORAH

דברים
שבת חזון

Devarim
Shabbos Chazon

July 25, 2009 - 4 Av 5769

Believe

Rabbi Adam Singer

We have been given reasons to believe in ourselves. We have accomplished. We have succeeded. We have excelled. There will be times when we are called on to remember these accomplishments when confronted by challenges which seem too big for us. Torah gives us 613 mitzvahs. These mitzvahs are responsibilities to ourselves, to our communities, and to our Creator. Though there are times when we feel intimidated and feel that it is impossible to keep these mitzvahs, they are all obtainable. We are capable of meeting all of the challenges in our lives and of actualizing the potential which comes from observing all of the mitzvahs. Each of us is capable of refraining entirely from speaking ill of other people (the sin called *lashon hora*). We are capable of observing Shabbos, of prayer which is perfect and desirable, of learning Torah as it was intended. Our experience testifies to our ability to meet these challenges and our national history testifies to it as well.

This Thursday, July 30th, is the fast day when we remember the tragedies which have befallen our people from from the time of the Bible through all of the horrors our own generation. It is the 9th day of the Hebrew month called Av. On this day in 1914 Germany declared war on Russia, beginning World War I and laying the seeds for the World War II and the destruction of European Jewry. On this day in 1492, Spanish Jewry was forced to evacuate what had been the cradle of Jewish civilization for nearly a millennia. Somehow, this day has been the genesis

for nearly all of the worst torment unleashed upon our people throughout our history. The Talmud explains that all of the suffering connected with this day begins with our ancestors failure to believe that G-d would give them the power to enter the land of Israel during the Exodus from Egypt recorded in the book of Numbers (*Tanit 29a*).

The Torah records that the Jews traveled from Egypt all the way to the border of the Land of Israel. Upon reaching the border of Israel, the people asked Moses to send spies to examine the land they were about to enter. Where should their attack begin? Where were the cities more fortified? Where were they less fortified? What terrain should they expect to encounter? (see *Bamidbar 13:1-20*) Ten of the twelve spies returned with heartbreaking accounts of a land that would devour the Jewish people. A land full of giants they could never hope to defeat. The remaining two, Joshua and Caleb, attempted to settle the people and tell them that they could certainly defeat the peoples living in the land, and that with G-d's help anything was possible, and they certainly could succeed. But it was too late. The people had given up hope and despaired of entering the land (see *Bamidbar 13:21-14:10*).

The Talmud records how all of the tragedies of so many generations are connected to this single tragic lack of faith of our ancestors. "The Holy One Blessed be He said, you cried for no reason [when you despaired of entering into the Land of Israel], I will set for you a reason to cry for generations [allowing the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem]" (*Tanis 29a*). The Talmud teaches that we were punished for

failing to believe in ourselves and to believe that G-d would give us the ability to accomplish what He asked us to do. When we despaired of our ability to follow G-d's command to conquer the Land of Israel we set off a chain of events of more and more painful and difficult challenges to find G-d and believe in Him and in our ability to serve Him even in the most desperate and difficult situations. When we neglected our ability to serve G-d in situations where his Providence was more obvious, we were punished by searching for Him in situations which were more desperate.

These are difficult words to read. They are difficult words to write. Yet, it is the nature of our world and our history to bear out the truth that we and others suffer when we fail to fulfill our responsibilities to ourselves, our Creator and to each other. When we fail to explore and achieve in the arenas where we are needed, the role where we were needed will go unfilled. Where we fail to use the blessings and abilities we've been given for good, we may, Heaven forbid, suffer the consequences of our failure to believe in ourselves and our failure to fulfill our destiny.

Be aware of what you can do. Take small, but real and concrete steps in coming closer to fulfilling all of what G-d asks of you. Take small but real steps in living a life of mitzvahs. Resolve yourself to keep Shabbos a little more this week. Reserve 20 minutes of your week and consciously resolve not to speak negatively about anyone for that entire 20 minutes. Make a set time to learn or just to consider how to grow for 5 minutes a day at some fixed time for the coming week. Take a solid step to do what you know that you can do to bring

our world and our people closer to the perfection which we know is possible.

May we all be blessed to enjoy a complete life of mitzvahs and to see the 9th of Av transformed from a day of mourning to a day of celebration with the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, may it be soon in our days. GOOD SHABBOS!!!

Salary is the amount of money you are underpaid.

Shabbos Chazon

Rabbi Yosef Samberg

This upcoming Thursday, if we don't merit the coming of Moshiach, we will find ourselves sitting on the floor yet again, observing Tisha B'av. Tisha B'av is arguably, the most difficult day to personalize and comprehend. The reason is obvious; if we never experienced the Bais Hamikdash in all of its splendor, how we can mourn its loss? What then occurs is just a long day of counting down hours until the conclusion of the fast. The real challenge is finding a thought or an action that can enhance the meaning of the day, resulting in, perhaps a tear shed, over the void that we feel due to the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash.

This Shabbos is traditionally called "Shabbos Chazon" because the first words of the Haftarah are "Chazon Yeshayahu" (the vision of Yeshayahu). It may be the "vision" that serves to help direct us to creating an image of what we should be

thinking on Tisha Bav to help us understand its essence.

All other Yomim Tovim have a central theme that we can relate to. Images of the Berlin Wall coming down help us recount the freedom we talk about on Pesach. Camping in the woods helps us to understand the closeness we can feel during Succos. Any large gathering (the Siyum Hashas, or lahavdil, pictures of people camping out for days on line to be the first to purchase an iPhone) illustrates the excitement of anticipation needed for Shavuos. While these Yomim Tovim have concrete images, Tisha B'av is lacking such images. What are we to do? To this, the name of the Shabbos helps us. Chazon means vision; a vision, which is in reality a use of one's imagination. And as we all know, what one imagines can be so vivid that it can appear as real as real itself. Tisha B'av is a day to use our imaginations. But where do we start?

Rabbi Nosson Wachtfogel zt"l, based on the Gemara in Maseches Berochas, commented that Tishav B'av is all about "children being exiled from the table of their Father." It is not difficult to remember what it was like to be sitting around the table with parents, whether it was a Shabbos meal, Thanksgiving dinner, or just regular supper during the week. The good food, the jokes, the conversations, and just the overall feeling of security of being surrounded by loving parents bring a memory-filled smile to the face. As we age, we sometimes find ourselves longing for one more meal with our parents just like the "good ol' days." What one would give to turn back time in order to taste a favorite food that mom made just for you and to hear one more

story from dad about his growing up when soda pop was only a nickel. What we probably miss the most is the arm around the shoulder that picked us up when we were feeling down and out. Now stop for a second and get nostalgic. Do you feel a tear welling up in the corner of your eye?

These feelings can serve as a basis for Tisha B'av. Take those memories and emotions that you just experienced and relive them on Thursday. Then transfer them to your relationship with G-d, our Father. When the Bais Hamikdash was standing, we were able to come to it and sense G-d's Divine Presence; we were able to see constant miracles testifying to G-d greatness. When we returned home from our pilgrimages, we weren't the same people; we left, spiritually uplifted and inspired, and we left with a renewed commitment to Torah, Mitzvos and G-d. But most of all, we left with the feeling of closeness to G-d and with the sense of G-d's never ending and unconditional love for us, even if we weren't living up to expectations. Now that we have no Bais Hamikdash to go to, it is a struggle to become and remain inspired, it's difficult to stand up for Shemona Esrai and feel that we talking directly to G-d. But the biggest tragedy is that we miss the feeling that G-d loves us like a parent no matter what we do. This is what it means when it says that we should feel like a child exiled from the table of his Father.

The Talmud states that those who mourn the destruction of the Temple will see and rejoice in its rebuilding. Please take the time on Thursday to contemplate these ideas in order to personalize them. With all the suffering that Jews are experiencing

personally and nationally, we need Moshach to come soon to help us. Let us hope that any tears that may be shed on Thursday from sadness, will merit us to shed tears of rejoicing with the building the

third Bais Hamikdash speedily in our days.

Have a great and meaningful Shabbos.