

# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Devarim/Tisha B'Av

August 9, 2019

## A Taste of Torah

### Built on Unity

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshia Freeman

This Shabbos is the ninth day of the month of Av, which is the saddest day of the Jewish year as we commemorate the destruction of the two Temples and the other tragedies that have befallen the Jewish People throughout our history. The Talmud (Yoma 9b) teaches us that the First Temple was destroyed because of the three cardinal sins: murder, idolatry and adultery. However, continues the Talmud, during the period of the Second Temple, people were involved in Torah study, mitzvah performance, and kindness. So why was the Second Temple destroyed?

The Talmud explains that it was destroyed because of baseless hatred. Interestingly, although people were performing acts of kindness, there still remained feelings of hatred among the people. Clearly, it is possible to act kindly toward others despite the existence of enmity.

The Maharal (Rabbi Yehuda Loew of Prague; 1512/1526-1609) explains the deeper roots behind the cause of the destruction. He writes that the essence of the First Temple was the clear presence of the *Shechina* (Divine presence), as evidenced by the many miracles discussed by our Sages that occurred there consistently. However, this lofty level of revelation required the Jews to maintain a very elevated and holy lifestyle to enable the *Shechina* to reside among them. When the Jewish People engaged in the three cardinal sins, which are the epitome of impurity, the spiritual foundation of the Temple lost its spiritual existence, allowing the enemies of the Jewish People to destroy it physically.

The Maharal continues that the Second Temple did not have the same level of revelation, as evidenced by the lack of many of the miracles that were present during the First Temple era. Rather, the foundation of the Second Temple was the unity of the Jewish People. When baseless hatred found its way into the Jewish People, the Temple lost its spiritual foundation, enabling its physical destruction.

What was the cause behind the baseless hatred? The Jerusalem Talmud (Yoma 4b) tells us that people during the Second Temple era loved their money, which caused them to hate one another. Why should love of money bring to hatred? Perhaps we can explain this with the words of Rabbeinu Yonah (1180-1263) in his commentary to Proverbs (18:1). The verse there states, "One who seeks desires will become disconnected." Rabbeinu Yonah explains that it is possible to become so focused solely on one's own personal pleasures that nobody else's needs are important, creating distance between oneself and others.

Based on this, we can understand the aforementioned passage. The Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer; 1720-1797) teaches that a major source of physical desires begins with excessive craving for money. Since people were so focused on their wealth, they became disconnected from others, which deteriorated into hatred.

There is an interesting insight from Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944/45-2001). He asks, why is the date of the death of Aharon Hakohen (the

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## Stories for the Soul

### Low Priority

Rabbi Nachum of Chernobyl (1730-1787) once stayed overnight at the home of a simple farmer. At midnight, Rabbi Nachum mournfully recited *tikun chatzos*, a prayer bemoaning the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple). The farmer was awakened by Rabbi Nachum's cries and asked him why he was weeping. Rabbi Nachum explained that there was once a *Bais HaMikdash* but it had been destroyed, and since then the Jewish People mourn for it. "Don't you also want to return to *Eretz Yisrael* (Land of Israel), with the *Bais HaMikdash* rebuilt?" the Rebbe asked.

"I don't know," the farmer replied. "I'll have to ask my wife." After taking counsel with his wife, he came back and said, "We can't go to *Eretz Yisrael*. We have a farm and cows and chickens... We can't just leave everything behind and go to *Eretz Yisrael*."

The Rebbe asked him, "But we suffer so much from the surrounding non-Jews who persecute us. Wouldn't it be better to be safe from them?"

The farmer replied that he'd have to speak with his wife about that, too. He returned and said, "My wife said, let Mashiach come and take the non-Jews to *Eretz Yisrael* with him. We'll remain here."

This Shabbos is Tisha B'Av, when we mourn the destruction and our current exile from our Land. Appreciating what we are truly lacking in life is a prerequisite to merit the Final Redemption.

## Kollel Happenings

### MOTZOEI SHABBOS NACHAMU KUMZITZ

Join the Kollel for an evening of inspirational singing on Motzoei Shabbos Nachamu, August 17<sup>th</sup> at the home of Rabbi Yissochor and Avigail Steinharter, 1395 Utica St. The event will feature live music, refreshments and divrei Torah. The kumzitz will be held at 9:45 pm. For more information, please contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org).

### THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR A BLOWN CALL AT SEPTEMBER 4<sup>th</sup> TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Jesse Aragon, president, Ark Seal International, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they tackle this fascinating subject. Sep. 4<sup>th</sup>, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at Edos, 198 S. Holly St. at 12:00 pm. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! For more information, contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** Tefillin of the head and arm are two independent mitzvos; if only one is available, it is worn and a *bracha* (blessing) is made. Nevertheless, they are generally worn together. Where do we find a custom of wearing one without the other, even when both are readily available?

**A:** Although the Gemara doesn't differentiate between Tisha B'Av and all other weekdays of the year regarding wearing tefillin, there is a universally practiced custom not to wear tefillin at *shacharis* on the morning of Tisha B'Av. Many Sephardic communities have the custom to don the tefillin

discreetly before going to pray, while others don tefillin only at *mincha*. The Rambam (Hilchos Ta'aniyos 5:11) cites the custom of many scholars not to wear tefillin of the head on Tisha B'Av, indicating that the arm-tefillin were worn by all on Tisha B'Av.

Sources: Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 555:1 and Sha'arei Teshuva *ibid.*, Shu"t Maharil Diskin 2:8.

**This week's question:** What is the association between the reading of the *haftarah* and the recitation of *Uva Letziyon* at *mincha* of Shabbos?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Eliezer Silver Part XIV

However, Rabbi Silver had a card up his sleeve. He reached out to Robert Taft, an Ohio Senator, son of former president William Howard Taft, who was an old family friend (as discussed previously in this column), to represent his case in court. Taft, convinced by Rabbi Silver that this was a matter

of religious freedom and not a mere zoning issue, agreed to take the case.

Mr. Taft took an approach of ascertaining the legal definition of a "house of worship." To that end, he had Rabbi Silver pen a scholarly piece on the importance of a mikvah to the Jewish People.

## A Taste of Torah

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High Priest) the only date of death mentioned in the entire Torah? He explains that the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 580) writes that despite the fact that one is not supposed to fast on Rosh Chodesh, the first of Av is an exception, as it is the *yahrtzeit* of Aharon. Rabbi Pincus suggests that Aharon's *yahrtzeit* occurs on Rosh Chodesh Av because Aharon was known for the great love he showed toward his fellow Jews. Since the Jews during the Second Temple did not follow his ways to pursue love and kindness, but rather had enmity toward each other, the departure of Aharon

occurs at the start of this saddest of all months, the month of Av, during which the Temple was destroyed. Therefore, the Shulchan Aruch mentions his *yahrtzeit* to show that we need to correct this shortcoming to merit the rebuilding of the Temple. One must be wary of being sucked into the desire for physical pleasures, which can remove one's sensitivity towards others. By emulating Aharon and working on building proper relationships with our fellow Jews, we will merit to see the coming of Mashiach and the building of the Final Temple speedily in our days.