



# TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Devarim

July 16, 2021

## A Taste of Torah Heaven on Earth

by Rabbi Chaim Gross

We find ourselves toward the end of what is known as the Three Weeks, the time period during which we are meant to mourn the loss of the *Bais Hamikdash*, our Holy Temple which was destroyed some two thousand years ago. We are meant to feel pain and sadness over its absence, to realize the void in our lives... But the age-old question haunts us and tugs at each of our hearts: How are we to yearn for a reality which, to us, is nothing more than an intangible fantasy that we never experienced? Let us take a look at the text that tells the story of this Destruction, let us peruse its verses, and hopefully emerge with a new perspective on this special time of sadness.

The second chapter of the Book of Eicha (Lamentations) begins with the following words: "*Hishlich mishamayim eretz tiferes Yisrael*," which is translated as, "He (G-d) cast down from Heaven to Earth the glory of Israel." However, when one carefully scrutinizes the verse, he will see that this is not entirely accurate. The verse, translated literally, reads, "He cast down from Heaven Earth." There is no "to" prefix before the Hebrew word "*eretz*," "Earth," resulting in a seemingly unintelligible phrase. However, as we journey through the next paragraphs together, we will discover that in this fragmented sentence is hidden the two-thousand-year-old pain that we are meant to experience today in 2021.

Let us attempt to follow these key words, "Heaven" and "Earth," to three other places in the Torah, which can unlock for us the secret of the aforementioned verse.

The first is in Parshas Vayitzei (Bereishis 28:17), where Yaakov stops to rest as he flees from his brother Eisav's murderous intentions. Yaakov falls asleep at the very spot where the *Bais Hamikdash* was destined to be built, and dreams - of a ladder which rests upon the Earth but its head reaches Heaven itself. Yaakov awakens and exclaims, "Behold, here will be the house of G-d, and this is the gateway to Heaven!"

The second location is later on in Parshas Eikev (Devarim 11:21), a verse which we recite daily in the *Shema*. There we are told that we must do the will of Hashem so that we will

have prolonged tenure in Eretz Yisrael, "like the days of Heaven on Earth." Again, a cryptic statement - what is meant by "the days of Heaven on Earth"?

The key to all this lies in our third and final source: a verse in Tehillim (Psalms 115:16) which we recite during *Hallel*. The verse states, "The Heaven - Heaven is for Hashem and the Earth He gave to Mankind." Now what in the world is that trying to say? And what is the meaning of the repetition at the beginning of the verse?

The Kotzker Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern; 1787-1859), as quoted by Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, explains that this last verse is actually expressing the entire mission of humanity and the purpose of its existence. When Hashem created the Universe, He had a vision in mind - that of a utopian reality in which there was complete recognition of His oneness, where spirituality and G-dly worship reigned supreme. However, Hashem did not create that reality in one unit; rather, He divided it into two halves. The first, Heaven, was indeed made in that ultimate state of perfection, but the second half, the Earth, was created in a state of imperfection, and was left to Mankind to complete. That is the deeper meaning of the verse: It begins by telling us G-d's ultimate intent that everything should be Heavenly. But what did He do? Heaven was made perfect, as G-d's domain, and the Earth was placed in the hands of flesh and blood to elevate it, to transform it into Heaven.

How does one go about accomplishing that? How do we turn this world of physicality into G-d's domain? Here we return to the verse in Parshas Vayitzei. Yaakov sleeps at the future site of the *Bais Hamikdash* and dreams of a ladder that rests upon Earth but reaches Heaven. Yaakov internalizes its message - that this place has the potential to bridge the gap between Heaven and Earth, that through the *Bais Hamikdash* that would one day stand there, G-d's presence would rest in this world, thereby transforming it into Heaven itself. Truly, it was the gateway to reach that utopian vision of an entirely spiritual universe.

This is also the meaning of the verse in

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## Stories for the Soul

### No Rush Order

Rabbi Moshe Kliers (1876-1934) was the rov of the city of Teveria (Tiberias) in Eretz Yisrael. One of his responsibilities in that capacity was leading Yeshiva Ohr Torah in the city.

Rabbi Kliers delivered lectures and oversaw the spiritual matters of the yeshiva, while his son served as administrator. The bulk of the financial upkeep of the yeshiva fell upon the shoulders of Rabbi Kliers and his son.

A major source of revenue came from overseas contributions of Jews in the Diaspora. Letters were mailed regularly to Jews across the world, and they responded by sending money back to the yeshiva. However, delivery of letters overseas only took place once every three months; missing this shipment meant waiting another three months.

It once occurred that Rabbi Kliers' son was very busy and was running out of time to get a batch of letters to the post office before the shipping deadline. Missing the deadline was no simple matter, as it would result in a three-month delay of the process of obtaining the always-needed funds.

On the very last day before the shipment would be sent, the son called his own son over, gave him the package of letters, and asked him to hurry to the post office to drop them off before it closed, explaining how important it was that these letters be mailed.

The boy was about to depart on his mission when he encountered his grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Kliers. Rabbi Kliers stopped his grandson and said, "Don't run! If you run, you will lose your sense of *yishuv hada'as* (calmness of mind and composure). It is worth losing one million dollars rather than losing your *yishuv hada'as* for even a moment!"

In this week's parsha, Moshe criticizes the Jewish People for the way they had approached him with their request to send spies to the Land of Canaan; they came in a disorderly, panicked fashion. This inauspicious start eventually led to the disastrous Sin of the Spies.

## Kollel Happenings

### KOLLEL TORAH CENTER DEDICATION EVENT/CHANUKAS HABAYIS ON AUG. 15

The Kollel will hold a Celebration of Torah with a Kollel Torah Center Dedication Event/Chanukas Habayis on Sunday, August 15. Harav Malkiel Kotler shlita, Rosh Yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood, will grace the event and present the keynote address. Musical inspiration by Eitan Katz. Visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org) for more details.

### MOTZOEI SHABBOS NACHAMU KUMZITZ

The Kollel's annual Motzoei Shabbos Nachamu Kumzitz will take place on Motzoei Shabbos, July 24th, 10 pm, at the Kollel Torah Center Youth Center. Live music, inspirational singing, refreshments and divrei Torah.

### SUMMER NIGHT SEDER FOR BACHURIM CONTINUES

The Kollel's Summer Night Seder for Bachurim is in full swing at the West Denver Kollle Torah Center. Boys join the Kollel's night seder. Refreshments and raffles nightly. A weekly stipend is available for those who attend consistently. Contact Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org), for more details. Sponsored in memory of Reuven ben Yosef.

## Halacha Riddles

**Last week's question:** When would different parts of *Havdala* be performed on two different days by the entirety of the Jewish People?

**Answer:** When Tisha B'Av occurs on Motzoei Shabbos-Sunday, *Havdala* is divided in two. One cannot recite the normal *Havdala* blessing over a cup of wine due to the fast. That part of *Havdala* is recited on Sunday night, following the fast. However, the blessing of *borei mi'orai ha'eish*, recited over a flame, can only be recited on Motzoei Shabbos, and so it is said in its regular time. The blessing on fragrant spices is omitted altogether, since it is inappropriate, during the mourning of Tisha B'Av, to smell the spices meant to provide pleasure at the

point of departure of the extra Shabbos soul (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 556:1 with Magen Avraham 1). (Outside of *Havdala*, it is permitted to smell fragrant spices on Tisha B'Av.)

It should be noted that the *Havdala* addendum to *Shemone Esrei, ata chonantonu*, is recited as usual; one who is not reciting *ma'ariv* must make sure to say "*Baruch Hamavdil bain kodesh lichol*" before doing any *melacha* (Shabbos-restricted work) (Mishna Berura ad loc.:2).

**This week's question:** How can the recitation of a single blessing prevent the need to repeat *Birkas Hamazon*?

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part VIII

During his time as rabbi of Galena, Rabbi Shapiro became interested in the activities of

Agudath Israel (or Agudas Yisroel), and he began to involve himself in its activities.

## A Taste of Torah

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Parshas Eikev. We are told that if we listen to all of G-d's commandments, we will live peacefully in the Land of Israel - but not simply live there in a state of physicality. Rather, it will be "like the days of Heaven on Earth." It will be that ultimate goal, finally achieved, when the line between sky and land blurs to the point that one cannot distinguish the difference between them, cannot tell where one ends and the next begins, for in truth there is no end or beginning - it is the days when Earth will have become Heaven. G-d will rest His presence among us, we will feel His closeness, and we will live with the clarity of his oneness.

This was the world that the Jewish People lived in while they had the Holy Temple.

But then came destruction. Suddenly, all that had been achieved, all that had been elevated, came crashing down. That Earth, which had been transformed into Heaven, was Heaven no longer. And we return to the verse in Eicha, which in just three words encapsulates the magnitude of all that we lost - "*Hishlich mishamayim eretz*" - G-d cast down from Heaven, Earth. Hashem didn't throw something from Heaven to Earth. No! He flung from Heaven the Earth itself - and we found ourselves in that ugly world of physicality, that world of confusion and unclarity, a world devoid of G-d's presence.

We wonder: How can I long for that reality when I've never experienced it? The answer is

that while we've never experienced that world in its totality, we have all had moments of it in our lives, moments when we suddenly reached that exhilarating state of absolute clarity, when all our doubts and uncertainties dissipate. We can finally "see" G-d, feel His presence all around us and know that there is nothing but Him. All at once, we are filled with indescribable joy and love for our Creator. For one person, it's a moment at the end of Yom Kippur when he cries out G-d's oneness, for another it's during the dancing on Simchas Torah. Someone else might feel it when, after toiling deep into the night to understand a section of Torah, it suddenly all comes together. And a fourth will reach it when witnessing the sun setting in a dazzling array of orange, red and purple hues reflecting in the water beneath it. But everyone has such Heavenly moments. And when they come, how we wish that they would last!

And so, when we want so much to connect to the mourning and loss of these weeks and wonder where to begin, all we need to do is close our eyes and envision one of those moments, to feel it and let it envelop us - and then to realize that this is what they had when there was a *Bais Hamikdash* - not for one second, but for every moment of their lives. And then, surely, we will be filled with longing for the time when that reality will return, when it will once again be days of Heaven on Earth - may it come speedily in our days.

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