

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

There are few more blazing passages in the whole of religious literature than the first chapter of the book of Isaiah, the great "vision," chazon, that gives its name to the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av, the saddest day of the Jewish year. It is more than great literature. It expresses one of the great prophetic truths, that a society cannot flourish without honesty and justice. It could not be more relevant to our time.

The Talmud (Shabbat 31a) states that when we leave this life and arrive at the world to come, the first question we will be asked will not be a conventionally religious one (Did you set aside times for learning Torah?) but rather, Did you act honestly [be-emunah] in business? I used to wonder how the rabbis felt certain about this. Death is, after all, "the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns." The answer it seems to me is this passage from Isaiah:

"See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her-but now murderers! Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water. Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them." (Is. 1:21-23)

Jerusalem's fate was sealed not by conventional religious failure but by the failure of people to act honestly. They engaged in sharp business practices that were highly profitable but hard to detect-mixing silver with baser metals, diluting wine. People were concerned with maximising profits, indifferent to the fact that others would suffer. The political system too had become corrupt. Politicians were using their office and influence to personal advantage. People knew about this or suspected it-Isaiah does not claim to be telling people something they didn't already know; he does not expect to surprise his listeners. The fact that people had come to expect no better from their leaders was itself a mark of moral decline.

This, says Isaiah, is the real danger: that widespread dishonesty and corruption saps the morale of a society, makes people cynical, opens up divisions between the rich and powerful and the poor and powerless, erodes the fabric of society and makes people wonder why they should make sacrifices for the

common good if everyone else seems to be bent on personal advantage. A nation in this condition is sick and in a state of incipient decline. What Isaiah saw and said with primal force and devastating clarity is that sometimes (organised) religion is not the solution but itself part of the problem.

It has always been tempting, even for a nation of monotheists, to slip into magical thinking: that we can atone for our sins or those of society by frequent attendances at the Temple, the offering of sacrifices, and conspicuous shows of piety. Few things, implies Isaiah, make G-d angrier than this: "The multitude of your sacrifices-what are they to me?" says the Lord... "When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me... I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen."

The corrupt not only believe they can fool their fellow humans; they believe they can fool G-d as well. When moral standards begin to break down in business, finance, trade and politics, a kind of collective madness takes hold of people-the sages said adam b'ahul al mamono, meaning, roughly, "money makes us do wild things"-and people come to believe that they are leading a charmed life, that luck is with them, that they will neither fail nor be found out. They even believe they can bribe G-d to look the other way. In the end it all comes crashing down and those who suffer most tend to be those who deserve it least.

Isaiah is making a prophetic point but one that has implications for economics and politics today and can be stated even in secular terms. The market economy is and must be a moral enterprise. Absent that, and eventually it will fail.

There used to be a belief among superficial readers of Adam Smith, prophet of free trade, that the market economy did not depend on morality at all: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." It was the brilliance of the system that it turned self-interest into the common good by what Smith called, almost mystically, an "invisible hand." Morality was not part of the system. It was unnecessary.

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL
AND THE WEB AT WWW.AISHDAS.ORG/TA.
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This was a misreading of Smith, who took morality very seriously indeed and wrote a book called *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. But it was also a misreading of economics. This was made clear, two centuries later, by a paradox in Games Theory known as *The Prisoner's Dilemma*. Without going into details, this imagined two people faced with a choice (to stay silent, confess or accuse the other). The outcome of their decision would depend on what the other person did, and this could not be known in advance. It can be shown that if both people act rationally in their own interest, they will produce an outcome that is bad for both of them. This seems to refute the basic premise of market economics, that the pursuit of self-interest serves the common good.

The negative outcome of the Prisoner's Dilemma can only be avoided if the two people repeatedly find themselves in the same situation. Eventually they realise they are harming one another and themselves. They learn to co-operate, which they can only do if they trust one another, and they will only do this if the other has earned that trust by acting honestly and with integrity.

In other words, the market economy depends on moral virtues that are not themselves produced by the market, and may be undermined by the market itself. For if the market is about the pursuit of profit, and if we can gain at other people's expense, then the pursuit of profit will lead, first to shady practices ("your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water"), then to the breakdown of trust, then to the collapse of the market itself.

A classic instance of this happened after the financial crash in 2008. For a decade, banks had engaged in doubtful practices, notably subprime mortgages and the securitization of risk through financial instruments so complex that even bankers themselves later admitted they did not fully understand them. They continued to authorize them despite Warren Buffet's warning in 2002 that subprime mortgages were "instruments of mass financial destruction." The result was the crash. But that was not the source of the depression/recession that followed. That happened because the banks no longer trusted one another. Credit was no longer freely available and in one country after another the economy stalled.

The key word, used by both Isaiah and the sages, is *emunah*, meaning faithfulness and trust. Isaiah in our haftara twice uses the phrase *kirya ne'emana*, "faithful city." The sages say that in heaven we will be asked, Did you conduct your business *be'emunah*? -- meaning, in such a way as to inspire trust. The market economy depends on trust. Absent that, and depend instead on contracts, lawyers, regulations and supervisory authorities, and there will be yet more scandals, collapses and crashes since the ingenuity of those who seek to sidestep the rules always exceeds those whose job it is to apply them. The only safe regulatory authority is conscience, the voice of G-d within the human heart forbidding us to do what we know is wrong but think we can get away with.

Isaiah's warning is as timely now as it was twenty-seven centuries ago. When morality is missing and economics and politics are driven by self-interest alone, trust fails and the society fabric unravels. That is how all great superpowers began their decline, and there is no exception.

In the long term, the evidence shows that it is sounder to follow prophets than profits. ©2012 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and *torah.org*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

This year the Shabat on which parsha of Dvarim is being read publicly in the synagogue is itself the ninth day of Av. There are differing customs as to how to treat this Shabat and whether any restrictions whatsoever should pertain to our usual Shabat pleasures and enjoyment. Even though the prevailing custom is to treat this Shabat in the usual and normal fashion, the parsha of Dvarim all by itself is sufficient warning to sober our attitudes.

For the review that Moshe provides for us of the events of the forty-year stay in the desert of Sinai by the Jewish people, contains within it the harbingers of all later disasters and tragedies that would befall the people of Israel. Rebellion against Moshe's authority and G-d's directions, internal disputes, pettiness and ingratitude, attempts to renounce previous commitments, disloyalty to the Land of Israel, all are on display in Moshe's oration as recorded in Dvarim.

Moshe's tone in describing these failings of the Jewish society of his day is one of grave disappointment, yet there is little indication in his words of despair or undue foreboding about the future of the people. Moshe does not mention G-d's offer, so to speak, to build the Jewish people through him solely while eliminating the rest of Israel from the future.

He does not portray himself as being indispensable for Jewish survival and success. In spite of all of the harsh facts of Jewish failures that Moshe outlines for us, he expresses no doubts that the people

will enter the Land of Israel and that G-d will continue to be with them even in their darkest hours.

In a deeper sense that is what the lesson of this Shabat teaches us. Shabat outweighs the ninth day of Av. That day will be overcome in Jewish history and national life. Jews will yet again inhabit the Land of Israel. Eventually our Temple will somehow be rebuilt. Thus the ninth day of Av is essentially temporary—a long temporary but still only temporary.

Shabat is permanent and eternal. Permanence always overcomes the temporary and eternity always triumphs over fleeting faddishness. In pushing off the observance of the fast day from Shabat to the next day, the Halacha reaffirmed the centrality and permanence of Shabat as a supreme value in Jewish life.

The rabbis declared that the ninth day of Av will yet be a holiday on the Jewish calendar. But that calendar is firmly rooted and based upon Shabat. The Jewish world faces great challenges, disappointments and dangers in our time just as it did in the time of Moshe. Many of them are caused by the absence of Shabat in the lives and hearts of so many Jews.

Moshe's sense of ultimate optimism regarding the fate of his beloved people is based upon the resilience of Jews to learn from their sins and errors and to adopt a Torah lifestyle, with Shabat as its centerpiece. May we live to see Shabat completely vanquish the ninth day of Av. © 2012 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Devarim is always read on Shabbat Hazon, the Shabbat before the Ninth of Av, the fast for the destruction of both Holy Temples, the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of our national sovereignty. This calendrical connection is signaled by the words, "How so [eicha in Hebrew] am I able to bear your contentiousness, your burdens and your quarrels" (Deuteronomy 1:12), which will be publicly read this Shabbat with the same haunting cantillations as the Scroll of Lamentations (Eicha).

As these words suggest, the gravest sin, which leads to Jerusalem's destruction, is strife within Israel, contentiousness, quarrelsomeness, the sin defined by our sages as "sinat hinam," causeless hatred. To this end, when the prophet Isaiah presents his optimistic vision of hope for redemption, he calls out, "Comfort you, comfort you, My people, speak upon the heart-Jerusalem and call out to her; her period [of exile] has been completed, her iniquity has been forgiven" (Isaiah 40:1,2).

Note that the prophet refers to the city as heart-Jerusalem, a compound noun, apparently it is "heart"

which defines Jerusalem. I am certain this is what Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook was referring to when he said of the Western Wall, symbol par excellence of Jerusalem: "There are some hearts which are of stone; and there are some stones which are truly hearts." Such are the stone-hearts of the Western Wall; such is Jerusalem stone-heart.

The heart serves a crucial function: It is the true life force, pumping oxygenated blood through the body; oxygen is what enables us to breathe and blood is the vital substance of human existence.

Abraham's descendants became a covenantal people chosen by G-d for an eternal mission, "in order that all gentiles of the earth be blessed by [his] seed. G-d chose [and loved] Abraham in order that he convey to his household after him... compassionate righteousness and moral justice". (Genesis 18: 19) According to all our prophets, this message will be conveyed at the end of days from the Jerusalem Temple, to which all the nations will flock. At that time, they will beat their swords into ploughshares, forsake the cultivation of warfare (Isaiah 2: 4, Micah 4:3), and "the nations will change to speak a pure language, they will all call upon the Name of Hashem and serve Him with a united resolve". (Zephaniah 3:9) Jerusalem will become the vehicle for Israel's expression of the purpose for its being.

The heart is also the source of human emotion, specifically love: "You shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5). When the great biblical interpreter, Rabbi Abraham ben Ezra (known as the Ibn Ezra, 1089 - 1164) had to define "your fellow" in the verse "And you shall love your fellow" (Leviticus 19:18), he concluded that it must refer to every human being; after all, the verse concludes with "I am the Lord," and the Lord created all of humanity from one divine womb.

Jerusalem will one day unite all of humanity within her bosom, for she is the heart, the shechina, the divine womb. This makes all human beings siblings, as G-d's children are inextricably interlocked by the love, we must feel for each other because of the part of G-d in each of us, and the responsibility each must therefore bear toward the other. The love which will emanate from Jerusalem must extend to all the nations, even those which have cruelly harmed us in the past, even those who have sought to destroy us. This love is extended for as long as they now come in peace to worship the G-d of love, forgiveness and peace. It must be an unconditional love, like a mother has for the fruits of her womb. It must be a love without cause, aspiring to repair the causeless hatred which brought about Jerusalem's demise.

In 1978, Prime Minister Menachem Begin, US President Jimmy Carter and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat met at Camp David to draft the peace agreement with Egypt. After all the negotiations had seemingly concluded, Carter handed Begin a letter to sign. The

prime minister turned white and returned the letter, refusing to sign it. "But I did not ask you to give up Jerusalem", said the American president, "I only asked that you put it on the negotiating table".

"You don't understand," said the Israeli premier. "For 2,000 years, we Jews have been reciting a verse from King David's psalms at every wedding ceremony: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose her cunning: Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I hold thee not above my highest joy.'" (Psalms 137: 5)

"But doesn't your Jewish law maintain that you must give up a limb in order to save the entire organism?" remonstrated Carter. "Yes," said Begin, "But not if the limb is one's heart. Jerusalem is the heart of Israel, the heart of the Jewish people. © 2012 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd the matter that is too difficult for you, bring to me, and I will hear [about] it (find out the answer)" (D'varim 1:17). Rashi, based on Chazal, tells us that Moshe was punished for having said this, with his punishment being to forget information about inheritances, thereby necessitating him to ask G-d to teach it to him again (Bamidbar 27:5). Last week, Zvi Gardenswartz asked me why it was specifically this law that Moshe forgot as a punishment, as opposed to any other law.

This question has multiple parts to it, as there were several other situations where Moshe did not know or remember what the law was: (1) the blasphemer, who had to be locked up until Moshe found out what to do with him (Vayikra 24:12); (2) the Sabbath violator, who was also locked up until Moshe was told what should be done with him (Bamidbar 15:34); (3) those who couldn't bring the Passover offering because they were ritually impure (Bamidbar 9:8); (4) when Zimri brought the Midyanite woman before Moshe (see Rashi on Bamidbar 25:6), yet he did not perform the act of zealotry that Pinachas subsequently did; (5) the need to purify vessels obtained in the war against Midyan, thereby necessitating Elazar to tell the nation to do so (Bamidbar 31:21); and (6) whether the Rosh Chodesh offering brought on the day of the inauguration of the Mishkan should be burned, or eaten despite the deaths of Aharon's sons (Vayikra 10:16-20). Some of these can be explained as anomalies or specific circumstances (for example, Gur Aryeh suggests that Moshe forgot about zealots being able to execute someone having relations with a non-Jew so that Pinachas could become the hero) or being a direct result of Moshe getting angry (see Rashi on Bamidbar 31:21); Targum Yonasan and Targum Yerushalmi list only four of the seven (B'nos Tz'lafchad, m'kalel, m'kosheish and Pesach Sheini) in their category of "things Moshe really

knew but pretended he didn't in order to set an example." Nevertheless, since the issue raised by the daughters of Tz'lafchad isn't the only time Moshe doesn't seem to have already known the answer, it is worth exploring how Chazal knew that this was where Moshe was punished, and why this was where he was punished.

One of the thoughts expressed by several commentators (e.g. Rabbeinu Bachye) is that the notion that daughters should inherit their father when there are no sons is so obvious that the only way Moshe could have not known it is if G-d purposely made him forget it. Although this point seems to have been made to address how we know which situation was a punishment, it is possible that it was also the reason why it was chosen to be the punishment. As several Midrashim put it, because Moshe presented it as if he was an expert, G-d made him forget a law that even his students' students knew (see Sifrei on D'varim 1:17), one that even women (see Bamidbar Rabbah 21:12) and children (see M'chilta d'Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai on Sh'mos 18:26) knew. However, this only works if the question was an easy one to answer. The Talmud (Bava Basra 119a) and Sifre (on Bamidbar 27:5) position the actual question to be a much more complicated one than simply whether a daughter ever inherits her father. [For other approaches as to how Chazal knew this was the situation where Moshe was punished, see Baal HaTurim, Taz, Maskil L'Dovid, and Gur Aryeh.]

Before suggesting that the issues involved in the other circumstances were too complex for his not knowing them to be considered a punishment, R' Sh'muel El-Moshnainu differentiates between issues that were "bein adam l'chaveiro" (between people) and those that were "bein adam l'Makom" (between a person and G-d), without explaining why this makes a difference. Was Moshe only offering to hear civil disputes? Was the problem with Moshe's wording that it denigrated other judges, as he would know answers that they didn't? (According to those who say the problem was Moshe putting himself in G-d's place, it would seem that it is more of "bein adam l'Makom" issue.) In any case, if the punishment had to be administered specifically in a "bein adam l'chaveiro" situation, none of the others qualify. (For other approaches as to why the issue raised by the daughters of Tz'lafchad was where Moshe was punished, see Maskil L'Dovid and Mahari"l Diskin.)

Another issue raised by the commentators is how Rashi could say that Moshe was punished, if the Talmud questions what was wrong with what Moshe said and concludes that his not knowing was not a punishment. G-d had never told him this law because He wanted it to become known through the daughters of Tz'lafchad, because of their merit. (Various explanations for Rashi are given; see Nachalas Yaakov, Rabbi M.Y. Kuperman's notes on same, B'er Yitzchok,

and Devek Tov, who explain why Moshe was punished even if he never claimed to be the source of the answers.) Nevertheless, from the "back and forth" of the Talmudic discussion, it becomes apparent that the notion that the law became known through the daughters of Tz'lafchad because of their merits does not negate the possibility that Moshe was being punished in the process. First the Talmud quotes Rabbi Chanina and/or Rabbi Yoshiya, who say that Moshe was punished for saying that anything that is too difficult should be brought to him. Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchok then asks what was wrong with Moshe saying so, since he didn't say he would tell them the answer but that he will find out the answer, meaning if he hadn't already heard it from G-d he would ask G-d directly. As a result of this question, the Talmud (possibly continuing Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchok's thoughts) says that the reason Moshe didn't know the answer is not because he forgot it, but, as was taught in the Sifre (on Bamidbar 27:5), because G-d purposely withheld the information from him until the daughters of Tz'lafchad asked their question, so that they would be part of the process of it becoming known. Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchok's question is not based on the Sifre, but on logic ("maskif"); he didn't think there was a reason for Moshe to be punished. (Obviously, others disagree.) He didn't say that Rabbi Chanina's approach was inconsistent with the Sifre, only that you don't need to say Moshe was punished in order to explain why he didn't know the answer, as the Sifre's explanation is sufficient. It is certainly possible that Moshe was being punished, but happened in a way that allowed the daughters of Tz'lafchad to be involved.

Since Moshe being punished and the law coming through the daughters of Tz'lafchad because of their merits are not mutually exclusive, there is no issue with Rashi quoting both (in Bamidbar, see Sefer HaZikaron), or that he was being punished (in D'varim). Additionally, it is possible that the reason this was where Moshe was punished is not because there is some direct connection between the laws of inheritance and why Moshe was punished. Rather, it was chosen because this was a situation where someone else deserved credit anyway.

Another possibility is based on Moshe's level of prophecy being beyond what anyone could reach on their own, a level given to him in the merit of the nation he led (as evidenced by his losing it when they sinned) and so that the Torah could be given through him. Similarly, an inheritance is not received based on one's accomplishments, but based on what his ancestors had. Perhaps this is why Moshe's punishment occurred specifically when transmitting the laws of inheritance; Moshe made it seem as if he knew all the answers, or could find out any answer, so G-d subtly reminded him that he only reached that level because it was given to him, much like an inheritance is given to the relative of the deceased. © 2012 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

At first glance, the portion of Devarim is a random recapitulation of events the Jews experienced in the desert. It seems unstructured and repetitive. Yet, a closer look reveals that there is a logical form at work.

The first major section deals with the experiences and episodes of the Jews during the first two years in the desert, up until G-d's decree that we were to wander there for 40 years.

This section describes G-d telling us immediately after our departure for Egypt that we will enter the Land of Israel. (Deuteronomy 1:6-8) In preparation for that entry, Moshe (Moses) lays out a system of jurisprudence necessary for the proper functioning of the nation. (Deuteronomy 1:9-18) With Am Yisrael now ready to enter the land, (Deuteronomy 1:19-20) the people ask Moshe to send spies to Canaan to investigate how it can best be conquered. A description of the spy story follows with the recounting of G-d's decree that the Jews would wander in the desert for 40 years. (Deuteronomy 1:21-48)

The second section in Devarim (Chapters 2, 3) is a brief review of what happened to Am Yisrael in the last two years of its wanderings. Here is described our contacts with the nations of Edom, Moab, Amon, Sichon and Bashan as we took a circuitous route into the land. What follows is Moshe's unsuccessful appeal to G-d that he be permitted to enter the land found in the beginning of next week's portion, Va-Etchanan.

Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffman points out that these two sections open and close with similar phraseology setting them off as distinct units. The first section begins with the phrase "rav lakhem, it is enough [that you've been at Sinai]" and "pnu lekhem, turn [to the land of Israel]." (Deuteronomy 1:6-7) The second section begins with similar terminology: "rav lakhem, it is enough [that you've wandered here in the desert]," "pnu lekhem, turn [to enter the land of Israel]." (Deuteronomy 2:3)

Each section, writes Rabbi Hoffman, similarly conclude with similar words-vateyshvu and vaneyshev. (Deuteronomy 1:46, Deuteronomy 43:9)

Both of these sections are preceded by the first five sentences in Deuteronomy which summarize the forty years described in brief in the first two sections we have already discussed. The first two sentences of Deuteronomy are headlines for the earlier events as found in the first section, and the next three sentences for the final happenings as laid out in the second section.

A mere surface reading suggests that Deuteronomy is a book which haphazardly repeats our travels through the desert. Yet, when one looks deeper and more carefully, one realizes that Devarim is a book

of exact and precise structure-much like the entire Torah. © 2009 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

The best part about books is that you can always look back at parts that are either unclear, or parts that you've missed or liked, and the Torah is no exception. With that in mind, though, why do we need a whole Sefer (Devarim, the book of Deuteronomy) dedicated to review the first 4 books, when all we'd have to do is look back and exam them? Also, why would you start a book of review with words of rebuke, as our Parsha does?

As Rabbi Twerski points out, the answer lies in a quote by Shlomo Hamelech (King Solomon), who said: "A conceited fool has no desire for understanding, but only wants to express his own views (18:2)." What's the point of a past if we don't learn from it? And what's the point of learning from our mistakes if we don't keep what we've learned and integrate it into our future? As we get closer to Tisha B'av, when both Beit Hamikdashim (Temples) were destroyed ON THE SAME DAY, the question applies even more.. Didn't the Jews learn from the destruction of the first Temple merely a few hundred years prior? Do we learn from the destruction of BOTH Temples so many years later? There's a whole Sefer in front of us pointing its finger at itself and the four volumes before it, begging us to read it, and read it AGAIN, until we find the meaning intended for us, and use it to enforce what we WILL do. It's the thirst of knowledge of our past that will lead to the accomplishments of our future! © 2012 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg

Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

The mourning for the Temple leads us to thoughts about sacrifices, but the prophets disparaged their significance, as we read in this week's Haftarah, "Why do I need all of your sacrifices, G-d says" [Yeshayahu 1:11]. It is written with respect to Shmuel and David, "They sat in Nayot... they are at Nayot, in Ramah" [Shmuel I 19:18, 19:22] -- How is Nayot connected to Ramah? The answer is that they sat and were occupied with the beauty of the world" (From the word "noy," beauty, referring to the Temple). [Yalkut Shimoni, Yehoshua 24]. As Rav Kook wrote, "They were involved in matters pertaining to the Temple, which would transform the world from its ugly state and make it beautiful."

It is written that when the world was created the Almighty took Adam aside and said to him, "Look how beautiful My works are, take care not to ruin My world." [Kohellet Rabba 7]. That hour is described by the verse that tells us that G-d "was walking in the garden" [Bereishit 3:8]. The presence of the Shechina in the world is what makes it beautiful, but mankind has ruined the world and made it ugly by causing the Shechina to leave. The purpose of the Temple is to bring the Shechina back to the world and to make it beautiful once again. For this to happen, the world needs that the nation of Yisrael will be in Eretz Yisrael. As the Ramban wrote, if the nation of Yisrael would not exist in the world, "all of creation would have been in vain" [Devarim 32:26].

The world is indeed developing from the technological and scientific point of view, and we are all happy about that, but the nation of Yisrael is not happy because we know that the world remains far away from its ultimate objective. As Rav Kook wrote:

"The community of Yisrael knows deep within itself... that all the progress of the world and of mankind... from the time of the destruction of the Temple... is merely an external and technical advance."

This is not what will bring the world to its ultimate goal. And that is why we mourn so for the Temple and eagerly await the return of the beauty of the world. That is why the daily prayers begin with matters pertaining to the Temple and ends with a prayer, "Let it be Your will that the Temple will be rebuilt..."

"A voice is heard at Ramah, the cry of weeping, it is Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be consoled for her sons who is no longer there" [Yirmiyahu 31:14]. What is the connection between Rachel crying and Ramah? Wasn't she buried on the road to Efrat, in the heritage of the tribe of Yehuda, while Ramah is in the heritage of Binyamin? Based on the above Midrash, Rav Kook explains that the main reason for Rachel's weeping is not the suffering of her children but rather the ideal of Yisrael and the Temple. Who will be able to transform the ugly world into a beautiful one while Yisrael remains in exile? This explains why the above verse ends in the singular, "who is no longer there," while logically it should be in the plural, "who are no longer there." The GRA says that this in fact is a reference to the Holy One, Blessed be He, who no longer appears in the world. And that is the main reason for the weeping.

The following appears in Naomi Shemer's song, Jerusalem of Gold: "Look how the cisterns have dried out / The market square is empty." A leftist poet complained about this line, claiming that the market is not empty but is full of Arabs. And this was Shemer's reply: "In my eyes, Jerusalem without Jews is a desolate city in mourning. Not only is this so, but Eretz Yisrael without Jews appears to me to be a spiritual desert. In addition, if the entire world would be empty of

any Jews, it would be a black hole in the universe."
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RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

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Chazal teach us that the second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of sinas chinam-baseless hatred between man and his fellow man. Unlike the first Beis HaMikdash that was rebuilt after seventy years, the second Beis HaMikdash has still not been rebuilt after almost two thousand years. Why is it impossible for sinas chinam and the Beis HaMikdash to coexist?

The Rambam in Hilchos Beis Habechira, when discussing the purpose of the Beis HaMikdash, highlights its role in enabling us to perform the mitzvah of aliyah laregel, i.e. coming to the Beis HaMikdash on the shalosh regalim and offering special korbanos. There are korbanos offered in the Beis HaMikdash throughout the year, yet the Rambam emphasizes aliyah laregel as a primary purpose of the Beis HaMikdash. As such, Aliyah laregel can serve as a model to understand the essence of the Beis HaMikdash.

On yom tov, we conclude the mi shebeirach with the phrase, "v'yizkeh la'alos l'regel im kol Yisroel echav-May he merit to fulfill aliyah laregel together with the entire Jewish People." After the Brisker Rov once received an aliyah on yom tov the gabbai inadvertently omitted the words "im kol Yisroel echav" when reciting the mi shebeirach. The Brisker Rov then insisted that the mi shebeirach be repeated. Apparently the mitzvah of aliyah laregel cannot be performed as an individual; visiting the Beis HaMikdash on the shalosh regalim must be done as part of the Jewish People. This idea is expressed in Devarim-"b'vo kol Yisroel- -- when all the Jews come". The essence of aliyah laregel is Klal Yisroel coming, as a unit, to the Beis HaMikdash, and therefore the mi shebeirach must reflect this. Perhaps this is why the Rambam highlights aliyah laregel as a primary purpose for the Beis HaMikdash. The Beis HaMikdash is not just a place where an individual can offer korbanos to Hashem; it is the place of avodas tzibbur that enables the Jewish people as a whole to serve Hashem.

The notion of avodas tzibbur in contrast to avodas yachid appears to be a halachic principle that applies to many korbanos offered in the Beis HaMikdash. Specifically, Chazal raise the following concern: the communal korbanos of the omer, shteihalechem, and lechem hapanim, which were purchased with the funds raised through machatzitz hashekel, were made of flour and had the status of a korban mincha. A korban mincha that belongs to a kohein may not be eaten. Since the kohanim gave a machatzitz hashekel and thus have a share in these communal menachos, how were these menachos

allowed to be eaten? This dilemma led some to believe that kohanim were in fact exempt from giving a machatzitz hashekel. However, we accept the view that kohanim are in fact obligated in machatzitz hashekel and therefore we are faced with this difficulty.

The permissibility of eating the aforementioned menachos presents a problem if one understands korbanos bought with communal (tzibbur) funds to be korbanos that belong to each and every individual that donated to the fund. The tzibbur, however, is not merely a group of individuals, but rather is a distinct entity called Klal Yisroel. As such, we need not be concerned that the kohanim's contribution to the machatzitz hashekel fund will render the menachos inedible, since the menachos did not belong to them as individuals, rather they belonged to Klal Yisroel as a distinct entity.

The idea of avodas tzibbur being distinct from a joint avodas hayachid of many individuals expresses itself in hilchos tefillah as well. Our tefillos are patterned after korbanos and we therefore have both tefillas yachid and tefillas tzibbur. The Rav, elaborating on the wording of the Rambam, develops the idea that chazoras hashatz is said as a form of avodas tzibbur. First we approach Hashem as individuals who are gathered together for our silent shemoneh esrei. We then follow with a tefillas hatzibbur that is reminiscent of the korban tamid which was purchased with the communal funds of machatzitz hashekel.

Recognizing that the Beis HaMikdash is the place of avodas tzibbur, we can understand why the presence of sinas chinam makes it impossible for the Beis HaMikdash to exist. A tzibbur can only be formed when there is love between the individual members who make up the tzibbur. As we mourn the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, we are mourning the loss of the opportunity to serve Hashem as a tzibbur comprised of all of Klal Yisroel. May we succeed in overcoming the obstacle of sinas chinam, thus enabling us to once again offer korbanos tzibbur and merit the beracha, "v'yizkeh la'alos l'regel im kol Yisroel echav v'nomer amen." © 2012 Rabbi Z. Sobolofsky and The TorahWeb Foundation

RABBI LABEL LAM

Dvar Torah

We sing on Friday evening the following poetic words, "Lovers of Hashem, those who long for the building of The Temple, delight and rejoice on the Holy Shabbos, like one who has received an endless inheritance..."

What does loving HASHEM and longing for the rebuilding of The Temple have to do with the depth of delight we have on the Holy Shabbos?

The story is told about a sole survivor of a shipwreck who washed up on a desert island. After having taken care of his most basic needs of food, clothing and shelter he began to forage soon after to

satisfy the next level of lacking, the need for human interaction. Looking down from a mountain view he espied what seemed to be signs of civilization. His hopes were confirmed when he stumbled upon a fully developed housing and commercial district. People, however were not to be found as he wandered from store, to store, to home calling out unsuccessfully for a human response. After six full days, in a moment of lapse, he suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder and noticed the streets bustling with people. The stranger invited him to come to his house for Shabbos. Nobody dare pause to answer his inquiries about where they had been because they all claimed to be too busy "getting ready for Shabbos." On Shabbos they would not speak about weekday matters.

He decided to wait till after Shabbos and meanwhile enjoy the high-spirited prayer services, divine cuisine, deeply resonant words of Torah, and angelic singing that accompanied the Shabbos there. After Shabbos, with just the light of the flickering havdallah (traditional observance marking the end of Shabbos) candle flashing in the eyes of all, the final blessing was recited and the candle neatly plunged into the awaiting dish of wine. Immediately the man began to ask but found to his surprise that he was alone again. The next week after six days the same scene transpired. Nobody uttered a word about the weekday activity and where all had been. Shabbos, another delicious Shabbos passed and after havdallah he was plunged into darkness and isolation again. Enlightened by two previous experiences he waited till next week and at the moment when the great dancing light of havdallah was about to be extinguished he quickly grabbed the Rabbi's hand and refused to yield until his curiosity was satisfied. Where does everyone go? Seeing that he "meant-business" the Rabbi explained, "This town has been here for hundreds of years as a port city even during the times of the Temple. Our greatest joy was the three times of the year when special emissaries were chosen and launched with great ceremony laden with a multitude of gifts to represent the community in Jerusalem at The Holy Temple. Upon their return we would live from holiday to holiday on the inspiring stories of open miracles and the tangible holiness present at those splendid events.

"One time we were awaiting the arrival of our messengers after the holiday. We all stood at the beach at the appointed time. The whole day went by and at the very end when the sun was setting the band started to play as our ship appeared on the horizon. As it moored closer we began to sense something was amiss. The lone figure on the boat sat with his head bowed in silence. "We gathered around him riddling him with questions till we grew silent and he spoke unspeakable words. He whispered in barely audible tones this impossible uttering, 'The Temple was destroyed!' We were all so shocked and hurt by the awful news that our hearts burst with grief and we died a simultaneous

death because of our loss. In the heaven there was a great stir because we had all arrived before our time and yet we had left the world. A compromise was offered that since we died because of our love for The Temple we were sent back to live out our appointed days on earth, only on Shabbos." That's the leg end! What does it mean?

The Bais HaMikdash rested in a place where we went three times yearly to be seen by and see HASHEM. The "eyes of the congregation" the Sanhedrin sat in that place. It was a place where HASHEM impressed human eyes with the certainty of His presence. Shabbos appeals to other senses and takes precedence in many ways over the Holy Temple. Therefore we cease building the Tabernacle to observe Shabbos and we eat and rejoice when the 9th of Av falls on Shabbos! Shabbos offers the experience of the Bais HaMikdash in time.

We once went to visit a blind woman in Jerusalem who was able to tell us volumes of accurate incites about our children just from "feeling the room". We were amazed. When we left one of our little boys said, 'That lady can't see with her eyes but she sure can see with her heart.'

When a person loses their ability to see, we often find that other senses become more heightened. That extra sensitivity, although not a complete compensation, allows the person to apprehend reality. Similarly, without The Temple, "The Almighty's Place", where His presence could be visibly perceived, we are stricken blind. However, if one loves to that degree and truly longs to behold HASHEM's presence, then Shabbos Kodesh-"HASHEM's Time" takes on a richer flavor of joy, consoling us each week with the awesome gift of seeing HASHEM with our hearts. © 2012 Rabbi L. Lam and torah.org

