

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

DEBARIM

JULY 28, 2012 9 AB 5772

The fast Of Tish'ah B'Ab will begin on Saturday night, July 28 and end on Sunday night, July 29. May we all merit to properly mourn the Bet HaMikdash and therefore be present to rejoice in its rebuilding.

DEDICATION: In appreciation of my wife and family who give up from their own time allowing me to do this

Friday Night: Candles: 7:56PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM –Please say Shemah at home by 8:35 AM
Kiddush in memory of Yisroel Moshe Reisman z'l Donated by The Azizo and Bibi Families

Pre Mincha Class with Baruch Abittan at 12:45 followed by Mincha at 1:15 (AMidah after 1:36)
Seuda Shelishit.....At Home
Fast Begins.....8:10 pm - Begin wearing Non-Leather shoes...8:55 pm
End of Shabbat.....8:55 pm Return to Synagogue Arbit.....9:15 pm

Sunday July 29-Fast of Tisha B'Ab

Shahrit.....8:00 am

Tentative program for Tisha BeAb after Chasot

1PM - Childrens Video from The Chafetz Chaim Heritage Foundation (\$4 per person \$12, family) followed by a special puppet show for Tisha BeAb by Mr Shabbos – Adults and Children invited

2PM Josh Alpert with a Presentation from Machon HaMikdash – The Temple Institue (understanding the Mikdash – What we had and what we will have with the Third Mikdash)

3PM – I Never Saw Another Butterfly – A video presentation of the Off Broadway Play

3:45 PM Chofetz Chaim Video: Seeing the Good in Others Rabbi Zelig Pliskin and Rabbi Jonathan Rietti

5:15 PM Chofetz Chaim Video: Seeing the Good in Others Rabbi Paysach Krohn & Rabbi Ephraim E Shapiro

6:45 PM: We are fortunate to have Rick Magder give a talk on Tisha BeAv- Rick together with his father and two brothers built one of the largest entertainment companies in Canada. Rick is a great speaker and tremendous scholar.

Minha.....7:45 pm / Arbit.....8:30 pm/ End of fast.....8:45/ 8:55 pm

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Daily 6:30 AM class – Shelah Hakadosh on the Perasha

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yanai – 8PM Monday night IS ON EVEN THOUGH WE THOUGHT IT WAS NOT
Hebrew Reading Crash Course – Cancelled this week
We would like to pray Mincha and Arbit first on Monday nights. 7:45PM

Men's Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30: Basar BeChalav – With Michael and David
Ladies Shabbat Class at the home of Tina Lemberger – each Shabbat at 4:45

Volley Ball with Daniel Wagner – Sunday mornings at the beach at 10AM All summer long.

Reserve the date - Scholar in residence - We are pleased to have Rabbi Avraham Priel andhis family join us as a scholar in residence, Aug 18, 2012. Rabbi Priel is a well known rabbi from the Sephardic Community, formally of the Sephardic Services at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue, the Rabbi is the founder and director of Midrash Yosef Shalom. We will be having a Friday night dinner at the shul where everyone can meet Rabbi Priel and his family in an intimate setting. Rabbi Priel will speak both on Friday night and on Shabbat day after musuf. To RSVP for the dinner please email Hindy Mizrahi hmizny@gmail.com or Patti Azizo pattif@netscape.com or call Patti 608-2320. Cost for the dinner: Children 3 and under free Children ages 4-10 \$10 Ages 11 and up \$18

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A personal note to the
 Congregation from Hindy Mizrahi

Dear Family of Sephardic
 Congregation of Long Beach,

I want to thank you all for your care and concern this past week. As much as I knew my brother was very sick and living on a miracle, his passing was very difficult for me. Your attendance at the funeral and/or shiva was very comforting. Each person that came or called brought a different element of comfort.

Many people asked about sending over food or anything else I needed. My family was cared for during our shiva week by my father's congregants. They went above and beyond. However, people are still asking what they can do. I am slowly getting back to myself and working on moving forward. For those that still feel the need to do something I ask that you send a contribution to Kids of Courage 445 Central Avenue Suite 216. Cedarhurst NY 11516. Their Director, Howie Kafka, went out of his way to help my parents with Moishe's Z"L care until the very end.

May we share happy occasions together and know of no more sorrow.

Take a peek into Kosher Culinary Arts School in Jerusalem with my daughter Mikhayla who is going through a rigorous 6 month program. bitemebymik.blogspot.com

More Synagogue Announcements

The Cub Scout meeting went very well and we have enough kids and adults to get started. We are looking to invite other Synagogue members. Pass the word.

"We are founding a Shomer Shabbat Cub Scout Troup for the Jewish Youth of Long Beach. If you are interested in learning more please contact Rabbi Yosef Colish . . . Our first meeting will be held Tuesday night August 14th at 7:30 in the Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach . . ."

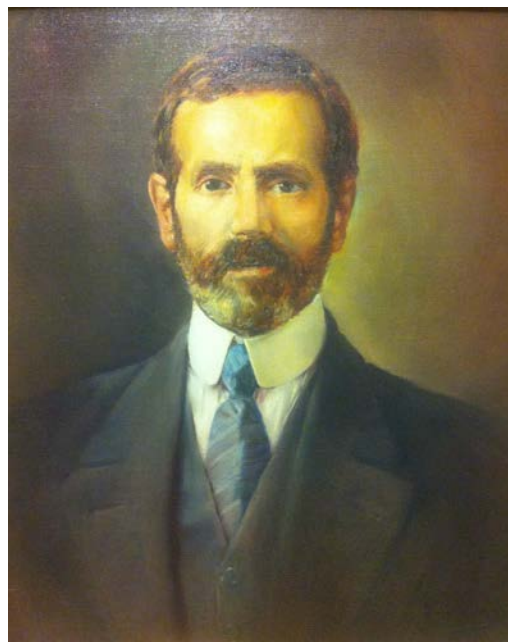
The Colish's want to invite the community to a Chanukat haBayit Wednesday night at 7:00 in their house 311 West Penn. There will be a Torah Class with light refreshments. Please RSVP. .

The Kosher Kitchen Class has been postponed until after the holidays. It's not too late to sign up! Please speak to Rabbi Yosef for more details.

We are planning a daily Mishna each morning after tefila beginning from Seder Moed and hope to make a Siyum at the Yahrzeit next year of Yisroel Moshe Reisman.

Spread the word: "Registration is underway for Sunday Funday Hoolahoop in for girls ages 6 and up in the Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach. Sunday mornings from 10:45-11:45. Spots are limited. \$15 per session, or \$10 per session with payment in advance for 10 sessions. Please contact Leah Colish to sign up."

Editors Notes Mourning the Mikdash



In all of our offices, for my entire life, there has always been one painting on the wall. It is the painting of a fine, distinguished and handsome man, my great grandfather Joseph A Bibi. I guess all our related family companies find their American origins in him, so it's fitting that his image graces the wall. What I never noticed until I walked by my dad's desk and checked the Yahrzeit (or as I was corrected by Dr. Stevan Dweck of California, a few weeks back, I should as a Sephardic Jew be using the term Mishmar) list a few moments ago was that my great grandfather passed away in 1927. I always imagined that my father who bears his grandfather's name had a relationship with the man, but I am not sure how much of a relationship they had in 2 ½ years. I do know that Joseph A Bibi was a world renowned Artisan who traveled the globe more than a century ago. He was a talmid hacham who studied the sodot of the Torah and as the patriarch of the family, who sacrificed so much and helped

design his community, we owe him much. But when the 19th of Elul comes around each year, aside from giving a class in his memory and saying a hashkava or memorial prayer, I don't really mourn his passing. The picture makes me think of him more than any of my other great grandparents and the stories I heard give me a connection, but its just a long distance connection. The Rabbis have a concept for this, its called aveylut yeshana – "old" mourning.

Chas VeShalom – heaven forbid – when someone passes away and a relative mourns for them, we call this "new" mourning or avelut chadasha. In halacha – Jewish Law – the closer one is to the tragedy the greater the level of mourning because we feel it. That person was here yesterday and now that person is gone. It's tangible. It's emotional. We have someone to mourn.

Hashem has created us so that over time following the loss of a loved one, we get over our mourning. We learn this from our forefather Yaakov's mourning for his son Joseph. Our Rabbis teach us that we can only begin to forget someone, and start to feel relief from the pain of mourning, after the person dies. Yaakov continued to mourn his son Joseph, for a full 22 years, because Yosef his son, was not dead.

When referring to the Churban – the destruction of the Temple – the Rabbis again use the term, "old" mourning. The fact is that the churban is difficult to relate to. The vast majority of us cannot begin to conceptualize the significance of the loss. We cannot imagine the enormous quantity of animals being slaughtered, cut and burned on the alter as smoke rose up. Even those who have gone through Daf

Yomi and have at least briefly reviewed the Talmud cannot understand the Ketoret or incense offering. The fact is that the entire chapter of Jewish Law relating to the Temple is relatively unknown.

How does one mourn for that which one finds difficult to imagine? I see my great grandfather's picture every day. I knew who he was, where he was born, where he lived, what he did and how it relates to me and still I acknowledge his passing, but without tears.

How are we to cry over a building?

Clearly, a mourner is sad because he has experienced a loss. In order for one to mourn the loss of the Bet haMikdash, one must realize what has been lost and how it relates to him individually, to the Jews as a nation and to the entire world.

And although the Gemarah is Sukkah writes, "one who has not seen the Bet HaMikdash has never seen a majestic building", we are certainly not mourning the loss of a building, per se. In fact one of the reasons Hashem burned the stones of the Mikdash was to teach us that it's not about the cover, it's about what the cover encases and represents.

Pirkei Avot teaches that ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Bet HaMikdash:

1. No woman miscarried from the smell of sacrificial meat.
2. Sacrificial meat never spoiled.
3. No flies were present where they sacrificed animals.
4. The Kohen Gadol never had an emission on Yom Kippur.

5. The fire on the Alter was never extinguished by rain.
6. The pillar of smoke was never moved by the wind.
7. The Omer, the Two Breads and Lechem HaPanim (left in the Sanctuary for a week at a time, and eaten on the following Shabbat) were never found to be invalid.
8. The people would stand crowded but have room to bow down.
9. Snakes and scorpions never hurt people in Jerusalem.
10. No one ever said to his friend that there is no place for me to stay in Jerusalem.

Why are these so important? I believe that they show us that the Bet HaMikdash was the place where the Jew encountered Hashem. Imagine walking towards Jerusalem and seeing the Temple on the mount in the distance, knowing it was windy but seeing a column of smoke go straight without wavering. Then stepping into the gates and witnessing people from all walks of life looking to connect. Each of the miracles brought Hashem to life. Imagine being packed in and then seeing there was room for everyone to lay down. You were in a place beyond the constraints of time and space. Each miracle experienced, made Hashem's presence real. They say that the time spent in Hashem's house was one of heightened consciousness to the point that we encountered Him just by being there.

If you could meet anyone in history, who would that be? Choose anyone and I have a better choice, G-d! So we mourn the disconnection from Hashem.

And I think part of the problem is that so many of us only mourn the event once a year. We don't take to heart, "If I forget thee Jerusalem". It's a song and a statement before breaking a glass and celebrating. We don't feel ourselves break with that glass. We need to think of Jerusalem and mourn the loss each time we pray the Amidah in the blessings of Boneh Yerushalayim and Masmiach Keren Yeshuah. We need to feel a bit of pain every time we see the Kotel with a golden dome behind it. We need to say Tikun Chasot reading the words, "remember Hashem what we had ... our inheritance has passed to strangers, our house to foreigners ... we are orphans ... why do you abandon us ..." And if not Tikun Chasot at some point in the day, stop and try to imagine what we had and what we lost and what we want.

Sadly too many of us who call for Mashiach would probably tell him upon his arrival, "wait we need to take care of things, give us some notice and come back when we are ready". We ignore the threats of our enemies which should prompt us to recall that we want and need Mashiach,

We must remind ourselves daily because by nature we forget.

Rabbi Abittan's z'sl teacher, Rav Soloveitchik explained that a mourner is enjoined from crying too much for his relative because, as the Rambam writes death is part of the natural course of events in this world. But the destruction of the Bet HaMikdash was an unnatural event. The Temple was much more than a physical structure. It symbolized the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people. It was the focal point of spirituality in the world. When we mourn the loss of the Mikdash, we are not crying for the wood and the stones. We

mourn the fact that we no longer see Hashem's presence as clearly in the world and that our relationship with Him is strained. We long for the day when the Jewish people will reunite with Hashem and feel his closeness once again. In other words, we hope for the day when the world will return to its natural state. That is why we are obligated to cry on Tisha B'Av (and commanded to remember our loss every day) and there is no limit to our mourning because the loss of the Bet HaMikdash is a reality we can never come to terms with.

Think about that, "the loss of the Bet HaMikdash is a reality we can never come to terms with".

We know that people are born and people die. We know we had ancestors, some we met, some we heard of and some who are both nameless and without story to us. We remember those we can, we respect them and mourn their loss.

But the loss of the Temple is not a loss of a building or even a relative. It's the loss of a connection. It's the loss of clarity. It's the loss of reality.

May we all merit to properly mourn the Bet HaMikdash each and every day and especially on Tisha BeAv and therefore be present to rejoice in its rebuilding.

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

MUNICH 40 years later ...

Today, the Rabbinical Council of America, representing more than 1,000 member rabbis, and the Orthodox Union, the largest Orthodox Jewish umbrella organization in the United States, issued the following statement:

"Today we join with the global Jewish community, political leaders, and leaders of the media and sports communities in formally calling upon the International Olympic Committee to hold a moment of silence during the Opening Ceremonies of the 2012 Olympics in commemoration of the 11 athletes from the State of Israel who were slain by terrorists at the 1972 Olympics in Munich.

It is not too late for the IOC to relent from its stubborn and unsympathetic refusal to grant this moment of silence to memorialize the violence perpetrated against innocent individuals and the self-described values of the Olympic movement.

Irrespective of what the IOC may do, we in the Orthodox Jewish community will commemorate these fallen innocents in our congregations. As we are presently in the most mournful time on the Jewish calendar – the nine days leading up to Tisha B'Av, on which we commemorate the destruction of the Holy Temples in Jerusalem and many other tragedies of our people – we will enter our synagogues this Friday evening, the very evening that the Olympics opening ceremonies will take place, to mark the saddest Sabbath of the year.

The leadership of the RCA and the OU urge our rabbis and congregations to mark a moment, on the eve of Shabbat Chazon and prior to Kabbalat Shabbat, to mourn the tragedy of the slain Israeli athletes – through the recital of Tehilim (Psalms).

May the families of the fallen Israeli athletes, and all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem, know comfort and consolation.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st and 2nd Aliyot: Moshe recounts the history of the 40 years from after the 2nd Luchos, until the request by the people to send the Spies. (Pasuk 12 is read to the tune of Eicha - Lamentations) He notes the establishment of the Sanhedrin and the Judicial system.

3rd and 4th Aliyot: The incident of the Meraglim - Spies and its terrible punishment is related. Remember, the sin of the Spies and the decree for that generation to die out in the desert occurred today, on Tisha B'Av 2449, 3266 years ago.

5th and 6th Aliyot: Moshe jumps 38 years during which the decree of the 40 years was carried out and focuses on Israel's encounter with the nations of: Eisav, Moav, and Ammon. The battles with Sichon and Og and the acquisition of Trans-Jordan are retold.

7th Aliya: Trans-Jordan is given to the 2 1/2 tribes, and Yehoshua is encouraged to view these victories as a promise of future success in taking Land.

The Third Haftorah – Isaiah 1:1-27 - The Shabbos preceding Tisha B'Av receives its name, "Chazon", from the opening verse of the Haftorah. Starting with the words "Chazon Yishayahu - A vision of Isaiah", we fearfully hear the echo of the Prophet as he decries Israel's betrayal of G-d. (1:11-15) Boundless selfishness, greed, misuse of power by those in authority, and oppression of the defenseless widow and orphan is why the Navi characterizes the people as "the lords of Sodom and the people of Gemorah." (1:10)

Hearing Yishayahu's indictment of the people, one would think that the end was near. In truth, Yishayahu began to prophesies in 3142 (619 b.c.e.) and the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed in 3338 (423 b.c.e); 196 years before the end! Clearly, the Navi's intent was to effect change in hope of averting the destruction. If so, our reason for mourning on Tisha B'Av must be better defined.

"The Jew does not mourn that thousand of years ago the Temple was destroyed, but that it had to be destroyed. Not over the destruction, but over the causes of its destruction". (S.R.Hirsch)

If only the people would have heeded the cry of the Navi! If only they could have foreseen with the clarity of a prophet's vision what it means for G-d to "draw back his protecting hand" (1:25) from Israel! Shabbas Chazon transports us back in time. We stand in the shadow of the Beis Hamikdash. We hear the word of G-d as the Navi beseeches His children to do Teshuva. Will we listen? Would we listen?

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"The ox knows its owner and the donkey the stall of its master, Yisrael doesn't know, My nation doesn't contemplate." (Yeshaya 1:3)

In this week's Haftarah, the prophet Yeshayahu begins to rebuke his generation with the above words. The prophet is saying that the people were worse than the animals and as a result, the temple will be destroyed. We read this on the Shabbat before Tish'ah B'Ab to get a feeling of what caused the destruction. Rashi explains the prophet's words: The ox doesn't change its nature. It doesn't say, "I will no longer carry any loads."

Each animal follows its nature, doing exactly what it was created to do without asking questions. The Jewish people, however, are different. "You have veered off course and changed your ways and so you are lower than the animals created to serve you.

Rabbi BenTzion Shafier says this Rashi is difficult to understand. There seems to be no comparison to an ox. It is the nature and instinct of an animal to obey. It doesn't think about it. It doesn't decide to submit. Built into every ox is the instinct to serve its master. Man, however, is different. Man has conflicting desires and wishes. In all of creation, only man has free will. So how can Rashi compare man with animal? Man has a much greater challenge.

The answer is that man is programmed for greatness. Half of his being is screaming for meaning, purpose and greatness. There is a powerful instinct within him that desires only that which is proper. The need for perfection is built into his essence. It isn't something he needs to earn, it is part of his very being.

And so the prophet Yeshaya rebuked his nation. "Being good isn't foreign to your nature. Following the Torah ways isn't something imposed by the outside, it is built into your very soul. If you have veered, then you have rebelled against your own nature.

On these very important days, let us heed the cry of our souls, that yearning to come close and thereby cause the rebuilding of the Bet Hamikdash speedily in our days, Amen. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

WONDER OF THE WORLD

While riding my bicycle under the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, which spans the entrance

to New York Harbor and connects the boroughs of Brooklyn and Staten Island, I was struck by the majesty of this feat of engineering: two super-highways riding piggyback, suspended across the Narrows. The bridge hangs across the bay against a backdrop of sea and sky. But as magnificent as it is, it is not on the list of the Seven Wonders of the World.

The list of Wonders is very archaic. The Wonders were masterful works of art and architecture produced thousands of years ago. Yet none of the Wonders are as mind-boggling as a cell phone call or e-mail transmitted thousands of miles in seconds through airwaves without wires, or digital photographs passed from computer to computer around the globe.

The more I stared in awe at the bridge, the more my attention was drawn to the sky, the water, and the natural landscape that comprised the backdrop to this great human achievement. How puny manmade "Wonders" become, when set against a Hashem-created background whose vast and overpowering scope overwhelms the limited boundaries of greatness any human Wonder can supply!

Absorbed in that thought, I began to realize that "big" and "vast" do not constitute "wonder." One human heart, a single human brain, or a person's eye or ear is so much more awe-inspiring. Human beings, with all their frailties, are the true Number One Wonder of the World. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR **Is it Worth it?**

The Gemara famously comments that the Second Temple was

destroyed because of the sin of "Sin'at Hinam," which is literally translated as "baseless hatred," or hatred for no reason.

I once asked one of my Rabbis about the precise meaning of this term, "Sin'at Hinam." Is there any hatred that's really "Hinam," without any cause or reason? There's always a reason why we fight with somebody or dislike somebody. When do we choose to hate somebody for no reason?

The Rabbi answered with a fictional story of a teacher who noticed a student playing with his pencil during class. This was obviously a distraction, and so the teacher told the student to stop. But the student continued playing with the pencil, and again, the teacher sternly demanded that he put the pencil down. When the student continued to disobey, the teacher came over to him with a stick, and smacked the child's wrist with full force, causing a serious injury.

The incident was quickly reported to the principal, who called in the teacher to reprimand him. He demanded an explanation for the teacher's violence. The teacher explained that he punished the child because the child was playing with his pencil during class.

The principal, of course, was horrified. "For this misdemeanor you smack a child? This is how you react?"

Most people would agree that the teacher injured the student for no reason. Technically speaking, there was a reason, but the reaction was so destructive and so out of proportion that for all intents and purposes, there was no reason for what he did.

And this is how we must look at all fighting and animosity among

Jews. Sure, we have our "reasons," but when we consider just how destructive fighting is, these are not reasons at all.

And it cannot be overstated how destructive in-fighting among Jews is. Our Sages tell us that there was plenty of Torah study during the time of the Bet Hamikdash. There were Yeshivot and great scholars. But the people couldn't get along. There was nasty politics and backstabbing. Different factions of Jews worked against each other, rather than with each other. And all the Torah learning in the world couldn't make up for this tragic situation. We can go to Shiurim and get inspired to learn and do Misvot, but that won't help us if we can't get along.

The Gemara (Erubin 18) says that since the Temple was destroyed, the world is run by only two letters – the letters of "Yod" and "Heh." The Arizal (Rabbi Yishak Luria of Safed, 1534-1572) explains that unity among Jews is what keeps the two parts of the divine Name – "Yod" and "Heh," and "Vav" and "Heh" – together. When there is disunity among Jews, there is disunity in the divine Name, as it were. When we fight, we break God's Name, removing the "Vav" and "Heh," leaving only the two letters of "Yod" and "Heh."

This result of the Temple's destruction is alluded to in Parashat Debarim. Moshe Rabbenu tells the people that it takes eleven days to journey from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea (1:2). The Keli Yakar (Rav Shlomo Efrayim Luntchitz of Prague, 1550-1619) comments that this verse alludes to the eleven days when we commemorate the Temple's destruction – the fasts of Asara Be'Tebet and Shiba Asar Be'Tammuz, and the first nine days of Ab (which of course culminate with Tisha B'Ab). These

eleven days are “from Horeb” – the result of the destruction (“Hurban”) whose effects we seek to reverse. We observe eleven days because 11 is the combined numerical value of the letters “Vav” and “Heh” – the two letters that are “missing” from the divine Name as a result of our fighting and inability to get along peacefully with one another.

Considering that fighting causes a rupture in the Name of God, all hatred is, indeed, “Hinam” – baseless and senseless. The next time we feel inclined to fight with a fellow Jew, let us ask ourselves, is it worth it? Is it worth destroying God’s Name, extending our state of exile, and negating the positive effects of all the Torah we study and Mitzvot we perform? Even if we were truly offended, or if we strongly object to what somebody did, is it worth making a fight? Is this any different than crushing a student’s arm because he played with a pencil? Does it make sense to cause such harm because somebody did something wrong to us?

This is the perspective we should have as we look to cure the ill of “Sin’at Hinam” and restore peace and harmony among the Jewish people. Even if we have valid grievances, the fight is not worth it. We are far better off staying together, working together and respecting one another so that we can repair the divine Name and bring our final redemption, speedily and in our days, Amen.

Rabbi Wein

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 God’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 God’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 God 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

Sir Jonathan Sacks Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

Profits and Prophets

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 God 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 God 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

bahul 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 God 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.

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 Game 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 God 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.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"And I shall bless those that bless you" (12:3)

From the very beginning Hakadosh Baruch Hu decreed: "va'avarecha mevarachecha" – I will give berachot to all those who bless Am Yisrael. The Talmud (Hullin 49A) states that this promise extends also to the

descendants of Abraham Abinu. Therefore, the first thing for us to understand is how great is our duty to bless the Jewish nation.

When you come to the last beracha in the Amida, you put all you have into it as you pray for Am Yisrael you say, "Establish peace, goodness and blessing, life, grace and kindness, and compassion over us and over all of Israel Your nation." This beracha is so important because it is a mitzvah in the Torah to bless Am Yisrael.

When you walk down a Jewish street and every house has a big mezuzah on the door, say a beracha for the people who live in those houses. Say aloud that everyone in those homes should be well for many happy years. They should all have a comfortable livelihood, pleasure and satisfaction from their children, fine matches for their children, only semahot/happy occasions in their houses, nothing but joy. And Hashem will say: I'm listening, and I shower my blessings on you.

When you gain this attribute of constantly blessing Jews you will: receive blessings from Hashem, and fulfill a mitzvah from the Torah, and emulate Hashem who "Loves His Jewish nation" (Daily Prayers), and you will cause yourself to increase your own love of your Jewish brothers which is another mitzvah of loving your fellow Jew, Ahavat Yisrael.

May we thereby gain the merit to see the rebuilding of The Bet Hamikdash soon.

Daily Prayer: "I hereby accept upon myself the Positive Commandment to: "Love my fellow Jew as I love myself." And I hereby Love every one of the Bene Yisrael as I love myself and all I possess."