

Good Shabbos, everyone.

Thank you to the *drasha* sponsors, Hillel and Dena Soclof, in memory of Hillel's brother, Yisroel Soclof, Yisroel ben Avraham Abba, whose *yahrtzeit* is 10 Av. May his *neshama* have an *aliya* and may Hillel and Dena be rewarded for their support of the shul with *bracha*, *hatzlacha*, and good health.

Yesterday morning, the IDF launched Operation Breaking Dawn, targeting the Islamic Jihad group in Gaza. May *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* protect the soldiers and all of Am Yisrael...amen.

Today is *Shabbos Chazon*. In the *haftara*, we read "*Chazon Yeshayahu*," where the Navi speaks on behalf of Hashem about the problems that led to the *churban*: "למה לי רוב זבחיכם יאמר ה' 'Why do I need all of your sacrifices?', says Hashem." "לא הפצתי" "I don't want them!"

חדשיכם ומועדיכם שנאה נפשי היו עלי לטורח נלאיתי נשוא "When you come to Me, to be seen before My face [i.e., on the *Shalosh Regalim*], who asked this of you?" "Your New Moons and your festivals, My soul hates; they have become a burden upon Me." "I cannot tolerate new moon and Shabbos assemblies celebrated with iniquity."

Finally, the Navi says, still in the name of Hashem, "When you spread your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you."

These harsh words of rebuke seem strange. The Navi is very clearly implying that the people were indeed performing *mitzvos*! They were bringing *korbanos*, keeping *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, davening to Hashem! Yet Hashem tells them He does not want or appreciate their *avoda*...

What were they doing wrong?

Rav Hirsch, in his commentary on the *haftaras*, provides an answer. He writes that, from an external perspective, the *היצוניות*, looking superficially, Jewish life at the time was vibrant. The *Beis Ha-Mikdash* was standing; the fire on the *mizbeiach* was aflame; on the *Shalosh Regalim*, the masses came to the *Beis Hamikdash*. To eyes fixed only on externals, nothing was missing. Everything was the way it was "supposed to be."

But looking at the *פנימיות*, the inner dimension, the intent and motivation of the Jewish people, revealed a very different picture. Evaluating not the actions, but the motivations of *Klal Yisrael*, there was a lack of thought and meaning, sincerity and feeling. Their *mitzva* observance had become rote and habitual at best. Their actions were not truly expressions of intent and meaning, they were just going through the motions.

And, through the Navi, Hashem is asking: What is a *korban* if it does not represent a relationship—bringing oneself closer to God. What is *tefilah* if it is just words and doesn't further one's relationship with Hashem? What are *mitzvos* without sincerity? Are they just actions without meaning? Their actions were vapid and vacant expression of nothingness. It was the emptiness of their actions, or worse, the dishonesty and falseness, that Hashem rejected.

How do we begin to rectify this sin? *Shabbos Chazon* is not just an occasion to read about the problem; but it is also an opportunity to begin to fix it. It is reported by the Tzemach Tzedek that the great Chassidic master **Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev** used to say that, on this Shabbos before *Tisha B'av*, *Shabbos Chazon*, every Jew is shown an image of the Third Temple. In a

beautiful parable, Rav Levi Yitzchak tells of a father who made a special garment for his son. The son tore the garment, so the father made a second one. The son ruined that also, so the father made a third garment—but kept it in the closet. Every year he would take it out and let his son gaze upon it. He would tell the son that if he improved his ways, he would be able to wear the new garment.

Some interpret this statement in a kabbalistic sense and assume that one's *neshama* actually has this vision on *Shabbos Chazon*. I think that one could understand this in a rational way; that celebrating Shabbos in the midst of mourning is the vision of the third Temple that Rav Levi Yitzchak is describing. With a newfound appreciation of spirituality from introspection during the Three Weeks that we are concluding, experiencing *Shabbos* is the secret to seeing the Third Temple.

What does this mean?

Shabbos, when kept properly, is an opportunity to connect to what is real. As the **Meshech Chochma** wrote:

משך חכמה דברים ה': י"ב ד"ה שמור את יום השבת לקדשו
והנה טעם השבת יש בו הודעת החידוש שהשי"ת ברא העולם יש מאין, וזהו עדות שמעידים שהוא ברא העולם. ויש טעם פרטי, כדי שיתיחד יום אחד שינוחו ממלאכתם ויפנו לבבם לדעת דרכי ה' והנהגתו, וילמדו תורה ולא יתגשמו בהויות העולם ומסיבותיו.

Shabbos carries with it the message of renewal that Hashem created the world out of nothing, and this is evidence that testifies that He created the world. And there is a more specific reason, so that one day is designated to rest from their work and turn their hearts to know the ways of G-d and His control, and learn Torah and not be consumed in the happenings of the world.

Shabbos is a time to strengthen and deepen our relationship with Hashem.

Yeshaya begins his rebuke by lamenting the fact that we do not “know Hashem.” We may be acting like we do, but the relationship is lacking.

יָדַע שׁוֹר קַנְהוּ וְחֹמֹר אָבוֹס בְּעֵלְיוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנֵן:

An ox knows its owner, a donkey its master's feeding trough: Israel does not know, My people take no thought.”

Shabbos is the opportunity, once a week, to renew ourselves...our sense of mission and vision, and to connect to one another and Hashem, in a real way.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in his *A Letter in the Scroll* (pp. 139 and 140) wrote:

“Shabbos is where a restless people rested and renewed itself. . . Shabbos is the day we stand still and let all our blessings catch up with us.

The Shabbos sustains every one of Judaism's great institutions. In the synagogue we re-engage with the community, praying their prayers, celebrating their joys, defining ourselves as part of the “We” rather than the “I”. Hearing and studying the Torah portion of the week, we travel back to join our ancestors at Sinai, when God spoke and gave us His written text, His marriage contract with the Jewish people. At home, I spend time – sacrosanct, undisturbed – with my family, my wife and children, and know that our marriage is sheltered under God's tabernacle of peace.. .

Achad Ha'am famously said: More than the Jews have kept the *Shabbos*, the *Shabbos* has kept the Jews.

This sentiment was expressed 900 years ago by the great Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi in *Kuzari*, 3:10, when he said that *Shabbos*, by reminding us about what is important and real, is the secret of our survival...

ספר הכוזרי מאמר ג אות י

י. אמר הכוזרי: כבר השבתי בעניינכם, וראיתי שיש לאלהים סוד בהשאירכם, ושהוא שם השבתות והמועדים מהגדול שבסבות בהשאיר תארכם והדרכם, כי האומות היו מחלקות אתכם ולוקחות אתכם לעבדים בעבור בינתכם וזוך דעתכם, והיו משימים אתכם עוד אנשי המלחמה, לולא אלה העתים שאתם שומרים אותם השמירה הזאת המעולה מפני שהם מאת האלהים ולעילות חזקות, כמו זכר למעשה בראשית, זכר ליציאת מצרים, זכר למתן תורה, וכלם ענינים אלהיים, אתם מוזהרים בשמירתם. ולולא הם לא היה אחד מכם לובש בגד נקי, ולא היה לכם קבוץ לזכרון תורתכם מפני שפלות נפשכם בהתמדת הגלות עליכם. ולולא הם לא הייתם מתנעמים יום אחד באורך ימיכם, וכבר היה לכם בזה ששית ימיכם מנוחת הגוף ומנוחת הנפש, אין המלכים יכולים עליה, מפני שנפשותם אינם מתישבות ביום מנוחתם, כי, אם יצטרכו ביום ההוא ליגיעה ותנועה, היו נעים ויגעים, ואין נפשותם במנוחה שלמה. ולולא הם, היה כל יגיעכם לזולתכם, מפני שהוא מזומן לשלל. אם כן הוצאתכם בהם ריוח לכם בעולם הזה ולעולם הבא, שההוצאה בהם לשם שמים.

10. Al Khazari: I have often reflected about you and come to the conclusion that God has some secret design in preserving you, and that He appointed the Sabbath and holy days among the strongest means of preserving your strength and lustre. The nations broke you up and made you their servants on account of your intelligence and purity. They would even have made you their warriors were it not for those festive seasons observed by you with so much conscientiousness, because they originate with God, and are based on such causes as 'Remembrance of the Creation,' 'Remembrance of the exodus from Egypt,' and 'Remembrance of the giving of the Law.' These are all divine commands, to observe which you are charged. Had these not been, not one of you would put on a clean garment; you would hold no congregation to remember the law, on account of your everlasting affliction and degradation. Had these not been, you would not enjoy a single day in your lives. Now, however, you are allowed to spend the sixth part of life in rest of body and soul. Even kings are unable to do likewise, as their souls have no respite on their days of rest. If the smallest business calls them on that day to work and stir, they must move and stir, complete rest being denied to them. Had these laws not been, your toil would benefit others, because it would become their prey. Whatever you spend on these days is your profit for this life and the next, because it is spent for the glory of God.

That is why the **Gemara in Shabbos 119b** describes *chillul Shabbos* violating the *Shabbos*, as one of the underlying causes of the *churban*.

שבת קי"ט ע"ב

לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שחללו בה את השבת, שנאמר (יחזקאל כב) "ומשבתותי העלימו עיניהם ואחל בתוכם."

And the **Sefas Emes** writes that, every *Shabbos*, we get to experience a relationship with Hashem, as if the *Beis Hamikdash* were here...

שפת אמת שמות פרשת שקלים שנה תרלב

לכך שבבת נראה שלא נחסר ע"י החורבן וכאלו ביהמ"ק קיים.

It is an opportunity to deepen our commitment, and make sure that we are not living superficially.

Rav Dessler 137 עמ' ח"ג writes

נורא הענין לדורנו דור עקבתא דמשחיא דור חיצוני. אנו רחוקים מהערכים הפנימיים של אמונה ובטחון, יראת שמים רצופה, טהרת הלב ואהבת הבריות זכה.

The generation preceding *Mashiach* will be exceedingly superficial, plagued by the same issues Yeshayahu discussed. He writes that, unfortunately, we are very far from possessing genuine values and sincere faith, fear of heaven, purity of heart, and love of our fellow man.

To correct this situation we must remember where we come from and to focus on our responsibilities to the greater community, *Klal Yisrael*. And to recognize that the many who came before us are counting on us.

I recently read a very moving story by **Rabbi YY Jacobson**. He writes:

“Rabbi Sholom Moshe Paltiel, the Chabad Rabbi and Shliach in Port Washington, NY, shared with me the following personal story: I was visiting Jewish patients in S. Francis Hospital, when I walked into the room of an elderly Jew named Irving, a Holocaust survivor, who was obviously quite sick, surrounded by his entire family. I spent some time with him. We talked about the horrors of his youth, and how he managed to survive and rebuild his life.

He told me it was his mother's words to him on the last night before they were separated. "She sat me down and said to me: Life is like a play (my mother loved the theater). Every one of us plays a part. Not just us, but our parents and grandparents, their parents and grandparents, all the way back to Abraham and Sarah. They're all part of this production. Each of us plays a part, and then, when your part is over, you go backstage. You're not gone, you're still there, looking, cheering, helping out in any way you can from behind the scenes."

And then mama grabbed my hand, looked me in the eye, and said: "Yisroel, I don't know what's going to happen, how long we'll be together, whether I'll survive this. But one thing I ask of you, if you survive: Don't give up, play your part. You might feel sad and lonely, but I beg of you: Don't give up. Play your role as best you can. Live your life to the fullest. I promise you, you won't be alone. Tate un ich, Babe un Zeide, mir velen aleh zein mit dir oif eibig, Daddy and me, Grandma and Grandpa, we will be with you forever, we'll be watching you from backstage.”

“It was those words from Mama that got me out of bed on many a difficult morning.”

By the time the man finished the story, there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

We must take stock this morning. Judaism looks very strong...vibrant and robust...but how deep is it? How substantive, how full of meaning and passion? What can we do to make sure that every fiber of our being is suffused with love of Hashem? What can we do to restore the relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

To live properly takes vision. *Chazon Yeshayahu*...tells us his vision and reminds us to develop our own... We must ask ourselves this morning: ***What kind of a nation do we wish to be? This choice is pertinent to us as individuals, as well. What kind of people do we wish to be?***

Rabbi Jacobson finishes his article:

Every soul which ever lived contributed to the Third Temple. Then they moved backstage, to allow the next generation to continue the work. But they never really left; they are just backstage.

Now it is our job to strike the match, and fill the world with light, to complete the play, when each of them will emerge from backstage and take their bow.

We're ready for the time when, as we say in the Aleinu prayer, “lecha tichra kol berech,” all creations will bow to You. We're ready for the final bow.

On this *Shabbos Chazon*, may we develop a deeper vision of what we can contribute to *Klal Yisrael* and may we merit soon to see and experience the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash*...*bimhera viyamenu*...amen.