

Good Shabbos, everyone.

Thank you to the drasha sponsors:

- Mark and Elsa Lustman in memory of Mark's mother, Anne Lustman, Chana Rachel bas Avraham Alter, whose 7<sup>th</sup> *yahrtezt* is the 21<sup>st</sup> of Av. May her *neshama* have an *aliya*. Also in honor of their grandson Ranan, who is visiting from Israel and celebrating the anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah this Shabbos. Mazel tov, Ranan!
- Tommy and Judy Weiss, in memory of Tommy's father, Fred Weiss, Chaim ben Yosef, whose *yahrzeit* is the 19<sup>th</sup> of Av. May his *neshama* have an *aliya*.

May the sponsors be rewarded for their generous support of the shul with *bracha* and *hatzlacha* and good health.

With the inauguration of the new Main Minyan, today is a big day for Shomrei! Building on the strong foundation of over 50 years of passion and *ruach*, the new Main Minyan will continue that vision, bringing *achdus* and *simcha* to our *avodas Hashem*. May we see many great things in this minyan! Special welcome to the very talented Moshe Storch, who is here from Los Angeles, leading a *ruach* filled *davening* this morning.

This Shabbos is called *Shabbos Nachamu*, based on the famous declaration of *Yeshayahu HaNavi*, which we read in this morning's *haftara* נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר אלקיכם—when *Hashem* directs his nation, Israel, **twice**, to be consoled. Why is it not enough to say it just once? נחמו עמי יאמר אלקיכם

In last week's *haftorah*, “*Chazon Yeshayahu*,” the same *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!*” כי תבואו לראות פני מי ביקש זאת מכם “*When you come to me to be seen before My face [i.e., on the Shalosh Regalim], who asked this of you?*” חדשיכם וברפורשכם כפייכם “*Your New Moons and your festivals, My soul hates; they have become a burden upon Me.*” Finally, the *Navi* says in the name of *Hashem*, אעלים עיני מכם גם כִּי־תִרְבּוּ תְּפִלָּה אֵינֶנִּי שֹׁמֵעַ “*When you spread your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you.*”

These words of this rebuke of *Klal Yisroel* seem strange. The *Navi* is very clearly implying that they were indeed performing *mitzvos*! They were bringing *korbanos*, keeping *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 *היצונית*, looking superficially, Jewish life at the time was vibrant. The *Beis Ha-Mikdash* was standing; the fire on the *mizbe'ach* was aflame; on the *Shalosh Regalim*, the masses came to the *Beis Ha-Mikdash*. In modern terms, the trains were all running on time. 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. 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.

**Rav Dessler** 137 מכתב מאליהו ח"ג עמ' 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 is 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 fellow man.

**Similarly, Rav Chaim Friedlander** quotes the **Vilna Gaon** פ"ג אות ג' as saying

וכן הוא בגלות הזה מדתן של ערב רב ו"נעשה לנו שם"

in our galus, the main challenge is superficiality—going through the motions and doing things just to be recognized and noticed by others—with little depth, meaning, or sincerity.

**T. S. Elliot** in a poem written about a century ago described modern man as

*Distracted from distraction by distraction*  
*Filled with fancies and empty of meaning*

Today, we still struggle with superficial spirituality and religious apathy. We must contemplate our own spirituality and ask the difficult questions. רחמנא ליבא בעי God desires our hearts, more than our actions, **spirituality by definition cannot be superficial!** Are we missing the main point?

*Mitzvos* are supposed to transform us—but if they are only skin deep; performed only superficially, they do not achieve their purpose.

So, what is the solution? How do we remedy this situation?

The path towards a solution is found in the *Navi's* words, ***Nachamu, Nachamu***. The repetition tells us not to do more, but to do what is required properly; to think more carefully about life; to realize that our *avoda* should not just be external—superficial, surface statements. Rather, it must be real—with sincerity and depth--informing our *penimius* our intent and motivation. That is why Yeshayahu continues ירושלים אל לב ירושלים don't focus on the external. Instead, focus on the **heart** of Jerusalem—what it really represented—the relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem.

When we look around at contemporary Orthodoxy in the year 2021, we might be tempted to evaluate our success based on numbers, and, on that basis alone, we might feel great. There are so many schools and *yeshivos*, *shiurim*, and *shuls*. There are more people studying in *yeshivos* than ever before in history. And that's wonderful. Torah life is thriving like never before. But we must ask ourselves, why, then, are we still in *galus*? What are we missing? Is there depth to our actions?

Our struggle with superficiality is not new. Long before *Yeshayahu haNavi*, the Jewish people made this mistake of superficiality. The first time they were given the *aseres ha-dibros* at Har Sinai—the laws did not penetrate their hearts and minds. They heard the message but did not internalize it. And that resulted in the ***cheit ha'egel***. When Moshe did not return when they expected him, the Jewish people panicked. They immediately reverted to the idolatrous practices

with which they were familiar. This happened because the *aseres ha-dibros* had not penetrated their hearts.

And I believe that is what Moshe Rabbeinu was trying to teach them, in probably the most famous Pasuk in the Torah. We read it this morning before the *aseres ha-dibros* are repeated, and coincidentally we say twice a day...

שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד

What does the word *shema* really mean? What does it mean to really **listen**?

The **Rashba** defined the word *shema* in a famous *teshuva* about faith.

שו"ת הרשב"א החדשות (מכתב יד) סימן שסח  
אמרתי נתבאר זה באור אמתי באמרו שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד, כאן העמידנו על היחוד והזהירנו לשמוע ולהבין  
מצד החקירה האמתית ונקבל להאמין, כי מלת שמע כוללת שלשה ענינים אלה, **שמיעת האזן** שנאמר **אזן שמעה**  
ותאשרני, **והבנת הלב** שנאמר ונתת לעבדך לב שומע, **וקבלת הדבר והאמנתו** שנאמר אם **שמוע תשמעו** אל מצותי.  
ותכלית כל זה שתשמע ותבינה ותחקרהו, ואחר החקירה וההבנה נאמין כי הוא ית' אחד.

He explains that the word *shema* has three connotations: Hearing with our ears, understanding with our hearts, and accepting and internalizing with our brains.

In other places, Moshe employs the word *r'ei*—see... Commentators write אינו דומה שמיעה לראיה...one cannot compare hearing to seeing. If seeing is believing, why does Moshe say *shema* and not *r'ei*?

**R. Yaakov Leiner** (1814-1878), in his sefer, *Beis Yaakov*, writes:

*From a human perspective it often seems as if seeing is a more precise form of knowledge than hearing. In fact, however, hearing has a greater power than seeing. Sight discloses the external aspect of things, but hearing reveals their inwardness.*

שמיעה Listening is about getting beyond the external. Listening also means trying to understand the true meaning of the commandments--going beyond the technical letter of the law, to the spirit of the law.

What Moshe would tell them later על לבבך as explained by **Rabbinu Bachai**, that Torah values should become a part of them.

רבינו בחיי דברים פרק ו': והיו הדברים האלה. היחוד ואהבה שהזכיר יהיו חקוקים על לבבכם.

If you think deeply, you can absorb and integrate these values, until they are engraved on your hearts. And that is why, when Moshe presents the ten commandments again, essentially repeating what was taught previously in Parashas Yisro, he begins

שמע ישראל את החקים ואת המשפטים אשר אנכי דבר באזניכם היום. . .

He is telling the Jewish people: This is take two... This time, don't just see or hear the commandments—**truly listen to them—understand them—internalize and identify with their meaning, engrave them on your heart, let them transform you...**

And this idea is summed up in a *pasuk* that encapsulates all of Torah

ועשית הישר והטוב בעיני ה' אלקיך. . . *Do what is right and good* . . .

**Rav Simcha Zissel Broide** writes that superficially hearing and following through are not enough. Instead, we must delve into the task of listening deeply and understanding so that we can apply the Torah perspective to all aspects of our lives.

שם דרך דברים עמ' ר"י: אלא היא מצוה כוללת להתעמק בהבנת המצוות כולם ובטעמם, כדי להשכיל להתבונן ולהבין מתוך המצוות שנצטוונו על מה שלא נתפרש לנו, מה רצונו ית' ומה טוב וישר בעינינו... ומבואר כי הציווי לעשות הישר בעיני ה' משמעותו שאין די בשמיעה או בעשיית המצוה גרידא, אלא יש להבין את עומק רצון השי"ת הטמון בציווי לעשותה.. ומצוה זו כוללת ומקיפה את כל מעשי האדם מהחל ועד כלה..

After all is said and done—that is the depth of the Torah life that we strive to live. The understanding, internalizing the message of a Torah lifestyle. Appreciating the depth of the Torah and understanding that the external trappings are meaningless if they do not represent a God-centered attitude—if they do not change our character and transform our inner selves.

נחמו נחמו, the double consolation, comes from a sincere and deep commitment to the words and the will of Hashem...to go beyond the superficial...to a profound relationship with Hashem. That is what we strive for as Jews, and what we aim to achieve here at Shomrei. But how can we develop depth? It involves consistency and commitment. It involves study and understanding. But it also requires passion and joy. To inaugurate this new minyan, we have decided to begin with a *niggun*-filled *tefilla*, which will hopefully set the tone for the future.

Built on the foundation of learning and understanding, music is the magic ingredient that can bring us to higher levels of *ahavas Hashem*.

In an article entitled “The Spirituality of Song” - **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** wrote: “*There is something profoundly spiritual about music. When language aspires to the transcendent, and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song. Jewish history is not so much read as sung. The rabbis enumerated ten songs at key moments in the life of the nation...*

*Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe...Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator.*

*So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody...*

*Faith is more like music than science. Science analyses, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. God is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of God's song. Faith is the ability to hear the music beneath the noise...So music is a signal of transcendence.”*

If we can learn to sing together, and if we can make sure that our actions represent real feeling and emotion in our *avodas Hashem*, then we will truly deserve to be consoled—to receive the *nechama* that Yeshayahu promises. May we be *zoche* soon to see the day when full consolation will occur with the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, *bimheira biyameinu*. . .amen.