

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary
Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future

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August 2017 • Tisha B'av 5777

Dedicated in memory of Rabbi Meyer and Rose Kramer of Philadelphia PA

הרב מאיר בן הרב חיים מנחם ז"ל ורייזל בת יהודה לייב ע"ה

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PERSPECTIVES ON JEWISH LIFE IN DIASPORA COMMUNITIES

Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein (South Africa) • Rabbi Arie Folger (Austria) • Rabbi Dani Rockoff (USA)

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Introduction

Endowed with prophetic abilities from a very young age, Yirmiyahu Hanavi invests the totality of his being into becoming an elevated spiritual personality. Yet his legacy was to be the one who foretold the impending destruction of Yerushalayim. Hakadosh Baruch Hu chooses Yirmiyahu to serve as the conduit in relaying His discontent with Am Yisrael. Yirmiyahu becomes the personification of pain, the bearer of bad news, as he pleads with the Jewish people to elevate their lives and change their ways.

Yirmiyahu's emotional laments are expressed in the verses of Megilas Eicha, and none more poignant than the third chapter — beginning with the words “Ani HaGever” — as Yirmiyahu bears witness to the calamities that befell the Jewish people.

Megilas Eicha states:

וְתִזְנַח מְשָׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי טוֹבָה
And my soul is removed far off from peace, I forgot prosperity.
Eicha 3:17

The Gemara comments:

מאי ותזנח משלום נפשי אמר ר' אבהו ז'
הדלקת נר בשבת נשיתי טובה אמר רבי ירמיה
זו בית המרחץ (אמר רבי יוחנן) זו רחיצת
ידים ורגלים בחמין ר' יצחק נפחא אמר ז'
מטה נאה וכלים נאים שעליה ר' אבא אמר
זו מטה מוצעת ואשה מקושטת לתלמידי
חכמים.

“And my soul is removed far off from peace, I forgot prosperity” (Lamentations 3:17). What is: And my soul is removed far off from peace? Rabbi Abbahu said: That is the lack of opportunity to engage in kindling the Shabbat lights, which a



Rabbi Yaakov Glasser

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refugee is unable to do. I forgot prosperity, Rabbi Yirmeya said: That is the lack of opportunity to bathe in the bathhouse. Rabbi Yochanan said: That is the lack of opportunity to engage in washing one's hands and feet in hot water. Rabbi Yitzchak Nappacha said: Prosperity is a pleasant bed and the pleasant bedclothes that are on it, which are not available in exile. Rabbi Abba said: That is a made bed, and a wife adorned, i.e., worthy of and suitable for Torah scholars.

Shabbat 25b (Translation: The William Davidson digital edition of the Koren Noé Talmud)

This is a striking interpretation. The verses are depicting the trauma and devastation of Jerusalem's destruction. And yet, the Gemara interprets the verses as portraying relatively common conveniences that have disappeared as a result of the *churban*. Lighting Shabbos candles, utilizing the bathhouse, washing ones hands and feet. Do these elements of life truly capture the anguish of Yirmiyahu?

The answer is that when reflecting upon *churban*, we often focus on the more extraordinary elements of destruction — the loss of our Beis Hamikdash and its associated patterns of Jewish life and the devastation of our Torah leadership and their legacy. However, the losses that are often most penetrating to the core of our people are those that disrupt

and uproot the normality of everyday life. Galus is manifest not only in the more fundamental elements of Jewish exile, but also in the enduring day-to-day challenges that we face in an unredeemed world. It is the accumulation of those challenges that serve to pose the ongoing threat to our survival as a vibrant and elevated people. Yirmiyahu affirmed the notion that the larger moments of suffering sometimes overshadow the more constant difficulties that characterize the vicissitudes of our lives.

This is true of individual challenges as well. So often, when someone in our community is suffering, we imagine that it is the larger-than-life dimensions of that experience that make the challenge so unbearable. Devoid of a solution to mitigate that reality, we distance ourselves from those enduring the challenge, leaving them feeling desperate and alone. Often, engaging in the more detailed and smaller challenges of life can alleviate a significant amount of pain, as so much of the challenge is indeed found in the upending of normalcy that comes with life's greatest tests. Perhaps we lack the capacity to propel the larger messianic solutions to our exile — but we can take hold of the smaller challenges of galus, and inch by inch bring our world to a moment of redemption.

Rav Yehuda Amital z"tl would point out that Rabbi Akiva's famous statement at the conclusion of *Maseches Makkos*, which depicts the enduring hope of the Jewish people, employs a verse that speaks not of larger cataclysmic and miraculous messianic revelations but rather something different:

בֶּה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת עַד יֵשְׁבוּ זְקֵנִים וְזִקְנוֹת

בְּרַחֲבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאִישׁ מִשְׁעֲנָתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ מֶרֶב יָמִים. וְרַחֲבוֹת הָעִיר יִמְלְאוּ יְלָדִים וְיֻלְדוֹת מִשְׁחָקִים בְּרַחֲבֶיהָ.

So said the Lord of Hosts: Elderly men and women will once again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand from old age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in those streets.

Zechariah 8:4-5

Our dream is for our lives to return to normal. To walk the streets of Jerusalem without fear or trepidation. To raise our families, build our homes, and grow our communities with a life devoted to avodas Hashem. May we merit to see this dream come to fruition in our times.



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The Three Weeks and The Penitential Season: *A Dedication In Honor Of My Parents*

I am honored to dedicate this issue of the Benjamin and Rose Berger Torah To-Go in memory of my dear parents, Rabbi Meyer and Mrs. Rose Kramer, z'l.

My father's yahrzeit is on 7 Tammuz, just ten days before the beginning of The Three Weeks. The yahrzeit of my mother is on Tzom Gedalyah, 3 Tishrei, during the Ten Days of Repentance. There is a chassidic saying that the Hebrew letters of "Av" are an acronym for "*Elul ba*" — Elul is coming. With the approach of Av, we are already on the threshold of the Penitential season — the month of Elul with its commitment to preparing for the Yamim Noraim, the Days of Awe.

During this season of spiritual striving, growth and repentance, there are many lessons that can be learned from my parents, who lived extraordinary lives full of chessed and devotion to Klal Yisrael.

Yerushalayim and Israel

The Three Weeks commemorate the destruction of the Holy Temples and the exile of the Jews from Israel, and Yom Kippur concludes with the prayer for our return to Yerushalayim. My parents had the merit to see the rebirth of the Jewish Nation in the Holy Land through the establishment of the State of Israel. This was a miracle

for which our People waited almost 2,000 years. Their involvement in Hapoel Hamizrachi and religious Zionism gave meaning to those years of their lives and ensured that Israel would be one of their focal points. How proud my father was when he spoke at the brit milah in Israel of his first Sabra grandchild, noting the restoration of the family to Israel after 2,000 years. Whether it be the heartfelt recitation of the Prayer for the State of Israel or commemorating the wondrous days of Yom Haatzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim, we, the generation living after these miracles, still need to constantly remember the words of Isaiah 62:1: "For Zion's sake I will not be silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be still, until her righteousness emanates like bright light, and her salvation blazes like a torch."

Kibbush Hakehillot and Kiruv Rechokim: Reclaiming lost communities and bringing near those who are distant

When my father learned in Yeshiva University, Yeshivat Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchanan (RIETS) in the 1930s and 40s, Orthodoxy was in a steep decline and retreat around the country. My father embraced Yeshiva's commitment to *kibbush hakehillot* at the encouragement of

his rebbe, Rav Dr. Samuel Belkin, zt'l. My father settled in Philadelphia to attend law school, and there he met my mother. Together they made the decision to consecrate their lives to the rabbinate in that city, where Orthodoxy was especially abandoned by many congregations. My father would go on to teach part time at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, but his full-time work would be to serve in congregations where the majority of congregants, like the city itself, were not religiously observant, and seek to bring them closer to the ideals of Yahadut. My mother was his full partner in these endeavors. In this vein, my father not only worked with and related to his congregants, but also with Jews of all backgrounds, and even with rabbis of other denominations, whom he treated with respect — he always exemplified treating all human beings with respect. I recall one very prominent Reform rabbi who would periodically call my father with religious questions when that rabbi had a traditionally-raised congregant who had some concern about proper Jewish practice, such as when one can conduct a wedding after the conclusion of Shabbat or when one may not marry during the days of the Omer and The Three Weeks. My father would explain to me that these Reform rabbis may not have had these religious concerns in

their own lives, but if a congregant of theirs had a religious bent, and that rabbi sought to do the right thing in such circumstances, that too was a wonderful merit that these rabbis earned.

For my parents, kiruv rechokim had two facets: One was reaching out to those distant from Jewish observance and trying to bring them closer. The other was reaching out to them and befriending them, even if they remained “rechokim” — distant and removed from our traditions! May we likewise have the fortitude and compassion to reach out to all Jews and treat them with dignity and respect.

Civic Responsibility and Hakarat Hatov

While my mother was born and raised in Philadelphia, my father was born in Russia in the early days of Communism, and his father and grandfathers, all rabbis, faced persecution and prison. My father and his parents and sister were able to escape to the United States when he was 7, and my grandfather then served as a rav in various small communities throughout the United States. My father’s secular schooling was in public schools through high school, while his father was his personal rebbe. After high school, he left his parents’ home in Iowa, with very little resources, as the family was poor, to enroll in Yeshiva College and RIETS. *Hakarat Hatov* — being appreciative for the good rendered on one’s behalf — was a lifelong trait of my father’s, who was indebted to Yeshiva University for his advanced education and personal support, and for its commitment to the preservation of traditional Judaism. He also always remembered

the freedom and liberty that the United States offered his family. He had wanted to volunteer to be an American military chaplain during WWII, but was rejected for health reasons, and he afterwards embraced his civic responsibility by learning and teaching about American law and its relationship to Jewish law. May we always remember the obligation to demonstrate and offer *Hakarat Hatov* and be responsible and law-abiding citizens.

Experiencing Different Jewish Communities and Styles of Education

The Orthodox Jewish community is blessed with so many different “*aydot*” (groups) that span the globe and centuries of religious expression, i.e. Ashkenaz, Sepharad, Aydot hamizrach, Taymani, Nusach ha’Ari, and Chassidic. My father thought it was important to expose us to these different “*nuschaot*” (liturgical variations) via music and prayer experiences. Though his was a typical Ashkenaz congregation, on Tishah B’Av, my father often took congregants to pray in Philadelphia’s historic colonial Congregation Mikveh Israel with its Spanish-Portuguese traditions. The chanting of every kinah with a specific, dirgeful tune, along with chapters of Aychah and Iyov recited with the Sepharadic cantillation, made Tishah B’Av there a very moving and meaningful experience. [For those in New York, the same uplifting service can be — and should be — experienced in America’s first congregation, Congregation Shearith Israel, The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue.] Another time, my father took us to Williamsburg (Brooklyn) for

Hoshanah Rabbah to experience the special flavor of davening among the Chassidim. We should want our families and congregants to experience the different kehillot in our midst.

I learned an important and impactful lesson at the age of 5 in Philadelphia’s Congregation Mikveh Israel. I was given a small tallit to wear, and in that awesome and majestic sanctuary of marble and silver, draped in black bunting for Tishah B’Av, I was escorted to the bimah to place the *rimonim* upon the Torah. This made such an impression upon me at that young age, that when I became a rav, I tried to find ways to invite all of the children in the congregation to actively participate in some aspect of the Torah service, usually by carrying one of the Torah ornaments or *yad* from and to the aron hakodesh where they were placed upon the Torah. I encourage other rabbonim to do the same. Another outreach opportunity for children that we instituted — especially those from non-observant families where the father was not in shul or for those without fathers — was for my shul president and me to unite our talittot to create enough space for the children to join us under the tallit for Birkat Kohanim and to sing along with the kohanim and respond Amen, together with me.

Chesed

“*Olam chesed yibaneh*” — the world is built on kindness. How fortunate I was to grow up in a home of chesed and gemilut chasadim. May that be a privilege granted to us all. Amen.

Doniel Zvi Kramer

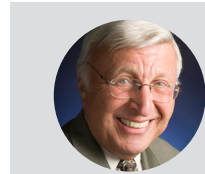
The Tragedy of Tisha B'av and the Redemption of Pesach

Jewish tradition recognizes that God makes His voice heard in many different ways. One of them is by way of the connection between events and the calendar, the link between a particular date and a divine message associated with it on a recurring basis.

The calendar makes clear that history isn't haphazard. It expresses divine order. It indicates God's involvement in the affairs of mankind. It demonstrates the *seder* of heavenly curse or blessing. Two vivid examples stand out as prime illustrations: One speaks in the language of punishment and retribution, the other via the loving tone of reward and redemption.

The first is the tragic day of the ninth of Av, the fast of Tisha B'Av. The second is the 15th of Nissan, the day commemorating our liberation from the slavery of Egypt, celebrated ever since as the festival of Passover.

The ninth day of the month of Av has, for millennia, been identified with the most terrible tragedies of Jewish history. It is almost beyond belief — and certainly far beyond statistical probability — that one and the same day could have served as the identical date for the greatest catastrophes



Rabbi Benjamin Blech

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to befall the Jewish people. On the ninth of Av, the First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. That alone would have been enough for it to become marked as a day of national fasting and mourning. But history reconfirmed Tisha B'Av's tragic reality five centuries later. When the Romans approached the Second Temple and put it to the torch, the Jews were shocked to realize that their Second Temple was destroyed *on exactly the same day as the first*.

A short time later, the Jews rebelled against Roman rule. They believed that their leader, Simon bar Kochba, would fulfill their messianic longings. But their hopes were cruelly dashed in 135 CE as the Jewish rebels were brutally butchered in the final battle at Betar. The date of the massacre? Of course — the ninth of Av!

The First Crusade was declared by Pope Urban II on July 20, 1095 — and when Jews looked at their calendars they realized to their great

consternation that the Hebrew date was the ninth of Av. 10,000 Jews were brutally slain in its first month and Jewish communities in France and the Rhineland were decimated; a grand total of 1.2 million Jews were killed by this crusade that started on the ninth of Av.

The Jews were expelled from England on July 25, 1290 — the ninth day of Av. Similarly, the Jews were expelled from France on July 21, 1306 — the ninth day of Av. In 1492, the Golden Age of Spain came to a close when Queen Isabella and her husband Ferdinand ordered that the Jews be banished from the land “for the greater glory of the church and the Christian religion.” The edict of expulsion was signed on March 31, 1492, and the Jews were given exactly four months to put their affairs in order and leave the country. The Hebrew date on which no Jews were allowed any longer to remain in the land where they had enjoyed welcome and prosperity for centuries? Of



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course you know it had to be — the ninth of Av.

More recently: Historians agree that World War II and the Holocaust were actually the long drawn out conclusion of World War I, which began in 1914. Barbara Tuchman wrote a book about that first great World War, which she called *The Guns of August*. Had a Jewish scholar written the book, perhaps it would have been titled with a more specific date than just a month. Yes, amazingly enough, the First World War also began, on the Hebrew calendar, on the ninth day of Av, on Tisha B'Av.

And still more: On August 2nd, 1941, on the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, SS commander Heinrich Himmler received approval from the Nazi party for "The Final Solution." One year later, to the day, the plan was formally implemented, the plan for the genocidal elimination of the entire Jewish people. On the ninth of Av 5702 (July 23, 1942), the mass deportation of all the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto began, en route to the death camp of Treblinka.

And yet still more: The Jewish community center in Buenos Aires was bombed, killing 86 and wounding

300 others, on Monday July 18, 1994. On the Jewish calendar, the ninth of Av, 5754.

These cannot all be meaningless coincidences. Indeed, Jewish scholars long ago linked them to a biblical incident. Tisha B'Av has a Torah source. The tragedies of the ninth day of Av are all rooted in the same story responsible for the Jews being denied entering the promised land of Canaan on their journey from Egypt. The trip from Mount Sinai could have been a very short one. The wandering in the wilderness might have taken just weeks instead of forty years were it not for the sin of the spies — a sin which so greatly angered God that He decreed that entire generation needed to die out before the Jews could enter the holy land.

The Torah tells us the story. God had assured the people of the blessings of the Land and of their ability, with divine assistance, to readily conquer it. But the people doubted God's word. They insisted on sending out spies to verify for themselves the truth of God's promise. Twelve spies, one for each tribe, scoured the land; ten returned with a fearful and negative report. When the Jewish people heard

the pessimistic words, they wept. And God was profoundly angered by their lack of trust and faith. It was then that He decreed that this generation was unworthy of seeing the fulfillment of the promise that they doubted. They would need to spend forty more years in the desert until the last remnant of these people with insufficient faith passed away. The day of that sin, when the Jews wept for no reason, was the ninth day of Av. "You wept today for no reason," God declared. "Whenever there will be occasion in the future to weep, it will continue to be on this very day." (*Ta'anit* 29a)

That edict was a powerful statement about the concept of calendric linkage. God is not only the creator of the universe. He continues to be involved with it. History is not a series of coincidences or inexplicable fate. And that truth is repeatedly demonstrated by the remarkable correspondence between specific dates and their significance for the Jewish people.

Tisha B'Av is rooted in tragedy. Its recurring message is the threat to Jewish survival. And yet remarkably enough there is within it a message of consolation and comfort. What is the name of the month whose ninth day

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has been so filled with misfortune? It is Av — the Hebrew word for father. No matter what happens, our Father is still in heaven and we are still His children. God knows what is happening. God cares. He will never forsake us. It is the message of the calendar and its seemingly impossible coincidences that at the same time reassures us of God's presence in spite of all the calamities that befall us.

And that is how the tragedy of Tisha B'Av remarkably enough became linked with the joyous festival of Passover.

Just as the ninth of Av was destined for sorrow, Passover was set aside for salvation. And just as Tisha B'Av has its list of horrible events throughout history, the 15th of Nissan has its moments of divine intervention for blessing. The sorrows as well as the joys of the Jewish people share divine scrutiny and direction.

It was on the 15th of Nissan that our ancestors in Egypt had the courage to take the blood of the lamb, the national god of Egypt, and smear it on their door posts, the most public demonstration of their rejection of Egyptian idolatry and their faith in God. As reward, God proclaimed, "This is a night of anticipation for

the Lord, to take them out of the land of Egypt; *this* night is the Lord's, guarding all the children of Israel *throughout their generations.*" [Exodus 12:42] Because of the Jewish commitment to God on this night of the 15th of Nissan, this very day will be blessed with similar moments of joy and divine recompense in the future, culminating with messianic redemption. It is the concept of calendric linkage — but this time for positive purpose.

The lack of faith of the Jews in the desert on the ninth day of Av a long time ago doomed it to perpetual mourning. The demonstration of faith by the Jews who observed the first Passover on the 15th of Nissan imbued that day with everlasting blessing.

It is at the Seder that we open the door for Elijah, the prophet appointed to announce the Messiah's imminent arrival. It is at the Seder that we pour a cup of wine for Elijah to demonstrate how confident we are we will surely be privileged to greet him. It is at the Seder, on the very same night of the 15th of Nissan when our ancestors were first redeemed, that we demonstrate our faith in a historic repetition of that moment.

It is at the Seder as well that we have

a remarkable custom that seems very strange — a custom that links the two days we have seen were decreed to two such dissimilar and contrasting verdicts. On the very night we look forward to redemption, we have a tradition of eating a hard-boiled egg, which many commentators explain is meant to commemorate the meal of mourning immediately prior to beginning the fast of Tisha B'Av.

What is the meaning of this seemingly bizarre connection?

It is the same truth that is expressed in yet another amazing way. Tradition teaches us that *Messiah will be born on Tisha B'Av*. What can the two possibly have in common? The answer is profound: From the tragedy of the one comes the redemption of the other. By rectifying the sin of the lack of faith responsible for the divine decree of Tisha B'Av, we will be worthy of the blessing of redemption.

What both of them, the 15th of Nissan and the ninth of Av, share is recognition of the Seder of history. To grasp the recurring message of the calendar is to confirm God as the ultimate power behind human events — and to believe with certainty the fulfillment of our prophetically promised destiny.



No matter what happens, our Father is still in heaven and we are still His children. He will never forsake us. It is the message of the calendar and its seemingly impossible coincidences that at the same time reassures us of God's presence in spite of all the calamities that befall us.

Making Tisha B'av More Meaningful

The tragedies of Tisha B'Av began in the desert with the episode of the spies who were sent to scout the land of Canaan. When Bnai Yisrael heard the slanderous report of ten of the twelve spies, the Torah records:

וַתִּשָּׂא כָּל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעָם בְּלַיְלָה הַהוּא.

The whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night.

Bamidbar 14:1

Our rabbis identify this day on the calendar as Tisha B'Av, and teach us that in response, Hashem said:

אתם בכיתם בכיה של חנם ואני קובע לכם בכיה לדורות.

You cried for nothing, I'll give you a reason to cry for generations.

Ta'anis 29a

A story is told that the French leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, was walking in Paris on Tisha B'Av. He passed a synagogue and heard the sounds of people weeping and lamenting in a foreign language. When he inquired why the men inside were sitting on the floor and mourning, he was told that they were Jews grieving for their Temple, which had been destroyed in Jerusalem almost 1,800 years earlier. Napoleon supposedly said, "If the Jews are still crying after so many hundreds of years, then I am certain the Temple will one day be rebuilt!"

It is now a few centuries later and we



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are still mourning and trying to keep Tisha B'Av relevant for our families as we pray for the building of the Bais Hamikdash in our time. When my children were younger, they asked a question that I am sure many other children (and adults) ask: "Why do we need three weeks to mourn the destruction of the Temples? Isn't that a little much?" Perhaps the answer is that we have no firsthand memories of the destruction of the two Temples, and therefore, it is necessary to have a prolonged mourning period to cultivate an emotional response to the ancient tragedies.

Here are some thoughts and suggestions on ways to make Tisha B'Av a meaningful and valuable experience to people of different ages and at different stages.

Making it Real

In my husband's first years as rabbi of the Young Israel of Hollywood, Florida, he did a project with the teenagers (not appropriate for every age group) on Tisha B'Av to create an understanding of the loss our nation incurred. He spent hours with the teens constructing a miniature version

of the Bais Hamikdash, and finished it by spray-painting the whole thing. He then lit a match and the teens watched in disbelief as the project in which they had invested so much time and energy went up in flames. A meaningful discussion ensued about what the Bais Hamikdash represented — and how great its loss was to the Jewish nation.

When one of my daughters was a counselor in camp, she had her campers write down their hopes and dreams and talk about how they would feel if all their hopes and dreams were destroyed. She tried to impress upon her campers that it wasn't just a building that was burned — it was the center of their lives. Homes were destroyed and families were torn apart, buried, and exiled far away. She created characters of similar ages and personalities of the campers and used storylines from some of the midrashim as a means of telling stories that her campers could relate to.

Years later, she is now the mother of four young children, and making Tisha B'Av real for her children takes on a different form. During the Nine Days, she designates a wall in their

home on which to build the Bais Hamikdash. She cuts out rectangles from brown and beige paper that are meant to look like bricks. On these bricks, the family writes various mitzvos that they perform to help bring the Mashiach and rebuild the third Bais Hamikdash.

When we sit in shul and read the kinnos, we can find ways to make the story personal. My husband notes that our family has a personal connection to Kinnah #10 — *Eichah Yashvah Chavatzeles HaSharon*.

A Talmudic passage is codified in the *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 128:25. In a congregation that is made up entirely of kohanim, if there are only ten present, they all go up to duchen. But who are they blessing? Their fellow Jews, who are all in the fields. Who responds “Amen”? The women and children who are in

shul. Rabbi Elazar HaKalir’s kinnah *Eichah Yashvah Chavatzeles HaSharon* identifies 24 kohanic cities. This is the only place in rabbinic literature where all of these cities are identified. The above mentioned halacha of a minyan of only kohanim is not hypothetical. It played out in these 24 cities.

This kinnah, which some might categorize as “dry,” came alive for my husband through the personal life story of my father, Mr. Erwin Katz, z”l. Opa, as we called him, was

How do we present a positive attitude toward our children while still feeling the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash on the inside?

born in 1915 in Flieden, Germany, a small town close to Fulda. When my husband asked him how many Jews lived there, Opa said that there were only 25 Jewish families in Flieden, and 23 of them were kohanim (Katz, Katzenstein, Katzmänn, et al). He became a Bar Mitzvah on Parshas Tzav, 1928, Shabbat HaGadol. He remembered going up to duchen that Pesach with his father and older brothers, and nobody was in the men’s section of the shul. Some women and children were in the balcony women’s section. This kinnah now became alive and real. When we think about the destroyed cities mentioned in the kinnah, we can also reflect on the little towns throughout Europe that were destroyed. Each had their own special character including Flieden, a town that paralleled the cities destroyed in *Eichah Yashvah Chavatzeles HaSharon*.

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Tisha B'Av for Those with Younger Children

For those with young children, it can be challenging to connect emotionally with Tisha B'Av. We aren't supposed to express happy and positive emotions but our children need our warmth and smiles. How do we present a positive attitude toward our children while still feeling the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash on the inside? Another challenge that my daughters (and many others with young children) face is the inability to go to shul because their children are not old enough. When they were younger, the emotions of Tisha B'Av were stirred by hearing the reading of Eicha or by attending the Kinnos. Those opportunities are no longer available for them.

One of my daughters achieves this balance by dedicating some of the night of Tisha B'Av, after the children are sleeping, to listening to a recording of the reading of Eicha to put herself in the right frame of mind. She then avails herself of other books and online resources to take the time without her children around to connect to Tisha B'Av. Some years, if there was a time that all her children were occupied, she would partner up with a friend attending the Tisha B'Av videos. The friend would put her phone near the speaker so my daughter could listen in. Other years, she would plan to be with some friends — the children could play and the adults could talk about Tisha B'Av-related topics to emote and inspire one another.

Tisha B'Av day can also be an opportunity to connect to Tisha B'Av

as a family. When my children were younger, we would spend time in Onset, Massachusetts. My children remember Tisha B'Av as a day when my husband held a small *yom iyun* (day of study) for the family, and we all participated in learning about Tisha B'Av. The older children watched Holocaust-related movies. They remember Tisha B'Av as a family day — not of fun, but of meaning.

Sometimes, a little creativity helps too. One of my daughters pointed out to me that if your children need to watch videos to pass the day, have them watch cooking videos or other food-related videos so that the adults who are supervising them and the older children can have a little more *inui nefesh* (affliction) while they are fasting.

“We knew YU was the place our children could accomplish everything they wanted in a fully Jewish environment.”

“Having attended YU and benefited from its education and religious culture we felt confident that it would provide those same opportunities for our children. With its balance of Limudei Kodosh and challenging academics, we knew YU would provide our children with the preparation needed for their careers as professionals, as well as reinforce the religious ideals that they will take with them in all that they do. The same values that permeated the walls of YU when we attended 35 years ago are the very values that we chose to inculcate in our children.

Today, our daughter is a sophomore at Yeshiva University. We are thrilled with the education she is receiving and her growth in Torah. She couldn't be happier.”

Michele & Jody Bardash
YU Parents



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Reflecting on the Galus Experience

Tisha B'Av is not only about contemplating previous tragedies. It is a day to take inventory of our current situation in exile. Whether we live in Eretz Yisrael or in the Diaspora, we all have our own personal galus-related challenges and Tisha B'Av is our opportunity to ponder them. I would like to share a meaningful email that one of my daughters sent out right before Tisha B'Av reflecting on her sister making Aliyah and on the challenge of being single:

I just finished my Seudah Hamafseket of bread and a hard-boiled egg dipped in ashes and salt water. Well, the salt water was from my tears — guess I was in the moment. I decided to take a few moments before I head over to shul to hear Eicha and share a few of my thoughts with you.

I've been dreading Tisha B'Av for a few weeks now, ever since I realized that it is the day I'll say goodbye to my sister and her family before they move to Israel. Of course, this is not a tragedy, chas v'shalom, quite the opposite. Making Aliya, fulfilling the dream of living life in Eretz Yisrael, where just the mere act of living daily life becomes intrinsically more meaningful — this is certainly the opposite of a tragedy. But it is not the same, going from being able to see someone frequently, to just once or twice a year. I'm trying my best not to complain, to lament every time I talk to anyone about this, but my heart is breaking inside me.

This is what Galut is — to feel my family apart with an ocean between us. This is not an oppression of the body, but an oppression of the soul. We are a diverse family, and I am so proud of all that we represent and accomplish. But diversity means we have different goals, different

desires, and different ways to reach and fulfill them.

I live in my own personal Galut. I am alone, and most of the time I am lucky not to be lonely. But where is my husband? Where are my children? I feel barren inside sometimes. מוֹשִׁיבִי, עֲקֶרֶת הַבַּיִת אִם-הַבְּנִים שְׁמָחָה: הִלְלוּ-הָ. He restores the barren woman to the house, into a joyful mother of children. Halleluy-ah (Tehillim 113:9)."

Most days, it may not be appropriate to express such strong feelings freely. But today is the most dramatic day of mourning of the year in the history of the Jewish people. So let me be dramatic today. Let me bare my heart, my pain, and my tears to you. And let me not be ashamed. For maybe this too will help the Geulah come closer.

So why am I baring my soul right now? A verse in Eicha struck me in particular (1:20): רָאָה ה' כִּי צָר-לִי, מַעֲי חֲמַרְמָרוּ-: "See, Hashem, how distressed I am, my insides churn; my heart is turned over within me..." I need to say to my family, "See!" I'm burning inside, and my heart is turned over, and you are the people I love most in this world, so I need you to hear me. Just listen, nothing else. הַמַּעֲלֹת: מִמַּעַמְמָקִים. קְרֹא תִידָה ה'. ה' שָׁמְעָה בְּקוֹלִי: תִּחְיֶנָּה אֲנִי, קִשְׁבוֹת--לְקוֹל, תִּחְנוּנֵי. "A Song of Ascents. Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord. Lord, listen to my voice; let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications (Tehillim 130:1-2)."

Sometimes I feel like Hashem doesn't hear me. How many times have I shed tears on Yom Kippur, praying for myself and for so many others? וְהָשׁוּחַ וְהָשׁוּחַ ... עָלֵי נַפְשִׁי "My soul remembers well, and makes me despondent." (Eicha 3:20) And yet... עַל-כֵּן. זֹאת אֲשִׁיב אֶל-לִבִּי, עַל-כֵּן. "Yet, this I bear in my heart, and I will still hope" (Eicha 3:21). This resonates so strongly within me, and the

same theme runs within Tehillim 130 (my favorite perek): קִוִּיתִי ה', קִוִּיתָה נַפְשִׁי: וְלִדְבָרוֹ הִוָּחֵלְתִּי. — "I hope for Hashem, my soul hopes, and in His word, I hope (Tehillim 130:5)."

Somehow I hope. Whether it is my inconsistent faith in Hashem, my everlasting love for my family, or some unknown strength within me, I hope. On a day like today, I can think of the words from HaTikvah: עוֹד לֹא אָבְדָה תְּקוּתָנוּ, ... "Our hope is not yet lost, the hope of two thousand years." I am blessed to see my own family living in Eretz Yisrael, I am blessed that I can be so close to my family, I am blessed, I am blessed, I am blessed. מָה-אֲשִׁיב לָהּ. ... כָּל תַּגְמוּלוֹהֶי עָלַי "How can I repay Hashem for all his kindness toward me? (Tehillim 116:12)"

Even though I cry and mourn, I am thankful.

Concluding Remarks

Now that my children are no longer at home, I don't have the same challenges that younger families face on Tisha B'Av. I am able to watch the broadcast of Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter's Kinnos presentation and go to shul to view inspiring videos. But this year, connecting to Tisha B'Av will present a unique challenge for my husband and me. Erev Tisha B'Av coincides with July 31st, the final day of my husband's 45-year career as a pulpit rabbi and 36 years as rabbi of our shul. For some of our congregants, it may add to the sadness of the day and for others, it may have a different effect. For us, it will be a novel way to spend his first day of retirement while suppressing the good feelings that should accompany it. Be'ezras Hashem, the Mashiach should arrive so we can all rejoice in the building of the Bais Hamikdash as Tisha B'Av becomes transformed into a yom tov.

Yosef and Rabbi Yishmael

On the Ninth of Av, we read the kinah *Arzei Halevanon* (#21) about the Ten Martyrs and their deaths at the hands of the Romans. More detail is provided in the *Eleh Ezkerah* prayer recited during the chazan's repetition of mussaf on Yom Kippur. Both *Arzei Halevanon* and *Eleh Ezkerah* are based on versions of the "*Asarah Harugei Malkhut*" (The Ten Martyrs) account in *Midrash Asarah Harugei Malkhut* and other later midrashim.¹ These prayers provide detailed descriptions of the torture and martyrdom of the Ten Rabbis in the period after the Second Temple's destruction; the rabbis include Raban Shimon b. Gamliel, R. Yishmael the Kohen Gadol, R. Haninah b. Teradion, R. Hutzpit the Meturgeman, R. Elazar b. Shamua, R. Hanina b. Hakinai, R. Yesheivav the Scribe, R. Yehudah b. Dama, and R. Yehudah b. Baba. They are executed by the Roman emperor as "punishment" for Joseph's sale by his ten brothers (Genesis 37).

The focus of the two tefillot is different; the kinah is recited while we are sitting on the floor, lamenting the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash and the loss of our sages, while the tefillah on Yom Kippur is said to remind us about the essence of the day, our request to God to forgive our sins. In addition, the purposes and objectives for the recital of the story on Tisha B'Av and Yom Kippur are different. On Yom Kippur, the story of the Ten Martyrs is recited because our sages tell us (*Moed Katan* 18a) that the death of the righteous serves as a *kapara*, an atonement, as did



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the sacrifices in the Beit Hamikdash. Tisha B'Av by contrast is not a day of atonement, but a day of mourning. If the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash requires mourning, it is incumbent upon the Jewish people to recount on Tisha B'Av all the major catastrophes and disasters that have befallen them.²

Why do we read kinot? Kinot are a profound response to Jewish tragedy. In the modern era, it is difficult for many to lament the loss of a building that we never utilized, of a lifestyle that we never lived. The kinot are read to enable us feel the sadness, stir emotion in us and reflect on our past.³ Reading about the galut, mothers eating their children and gedolim having their skin flayed, may help us focus on the tragedies of the day. Each kinah has its own unique message; *Eleh Ezkerah* focuses on individuals who died for the sake of the community at large.

I believe that there may be another motivation for including the martyrs in the service of Tisha B'Av. One of the Ten Martyrs was Rabbi Yishmael, Ishmael b. Elisha hakohen, a tannah who lived during the first and second centuries. He is known for his famous thirteen hermeneutical principles that many recite before *Pesukei D'Zimra* each morning.⁴ Who was Rabbi Yishmael and why was he one of the

Ten Martyrs? Let us first examine his history.

The earliest story about Rabbi Yishmael is recounted in the Jerusalem Talmud, *Horayot* 3:4:

מעשה בי רבי יהושע שעלה לרומי אמרו על תינוק אחד ירושלמי שהיה אדמוני עם יפה עינים וטוב רואי וקצוותיו מסודרות לו תלתלים והוא עומד בקלון והלך רבי יהושע לבדוק כיון שהגיע לפתחו נענה ר' יהושע ואמר לו מי נתן למשימה יעקב וישראל לבודדים הלא ה' (ישעיהו מב:כד) נענה התינוק ואמר לו זו חטאנו לו ולא אבו בדרכיו הלך ולא שמעו בתורתו מיד זלגו עיניו דמעות ואמר מעיד אני עלי את השמים ואת הארץ שאיני זז מיד עד שאפדנו ופדאו בממון הרבה ושלחו לארץ ישראל וקרא עליו הפסוק הזה בני ציון היקרים וגו' (איכה ד:ה).

An incident is told of Rabbi Yehoshua who went to Rome. There he was told about a child from Jerusalem with a ruddy complexion, beautiful eyes, a handsome face and curly locks of hair, who was imprisoned in a slave jail. Rabbi Yehoshua went to examine him. As he reached the entrance, he recited: "Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler, and Israel to the robbers? Surely the Lord?" (Isaiah 42:24). The child answered and said: "Against Him we have sinned, He in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey." (Isaiah 42:24). Thereupon Rabbi Yehoshua's eyes filled with tears, and he said: "I call heaven and earth as my witnesses that

I shall not budge from this spot until I have redeemed this child!" He redeemed him for a prodigious sum of money and sent him to the land of Israel. And concerning him, the Torah has said: "The precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold. How they are reckoned as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands." (Lamentations 4:2).

The Talmud Bavli, Gittin 58a, has a more concise version of this story and specifically identifies the child as R. Yishmael. There are many details we learn about Rabbi Yishmael from this story. It is interesting to note that the Talmud describes in detail his beauty; his complexion and his hair stand out as unique. Not many sages have their looks described in detail in this way. He is in jail in Rome as a child, for what reason we are not told, although we can assume he was imprisoned because he was Jewish. We learn that from a young age, he was well educated, knowledgeable and had incredible insight into the Torah.

Rabbi Yishmael is a kohen, clearly coming from a prestigious family. According to the Gemara in *Baba Kamma* 80a, he was from the upper

Galilee (this does seem to contradict the Talmud in *Horayot*). However prestigious his family was as kohanim, he levels a harsh indictment against them for their actions.

אמר ר' ישמעאל: מבעלי בתים שבגליל העליון היו בית אבא, ומפני מה חרבו? שהיו מרעין בחורשין, ודנין דיני ממונות ביחיד, ואע"פ שהיו להם חורשים סמוך לבתיהם, שדה קטנה היתה ומעבירין דרך עליה.

Rabbi Yishmael said: My father's house in Galil was destroyed because they used to graze small animals in forests and judge monetary cases alone (without a Beit Din of three). Even though they had forests near their houses, someone else owned a small field on the way to the forest.

He blames their destruction on their violation of halakha. In *Baba Kamma* 81, the *Talmud* describes the institution of Yehoshua, who forbade the grazing of animals in the fields so that the land would instead be built and settled. But for the purposes of animal husbandry, the grazing was permitted. While Rabbi Yishmael's family observed this edict by taking their animals to graze in the forest, they earned Rabbi Yishmael's censure for infringing on the rights of their neighbors by passing through the small field on their way to the forest.⁵

In *Sanhadrin* 5a, the Talmud lists several cases in which a single individual would be permitted to rule on financial matters — if one were an expert, or if one received express permission from the exilarch. Rabbi Yishmael blames his family for adjudicating financial matters independently without judicial license. This is not a clear biblical prohibition, yet Rabbi Yishmael considers this to be one the reasons his family's home was destroyed.

Why does he judge his family so harshly? If they were in fact kohanim, they would be the leaders of their community. Leaders are held to a higher standard because they are supposed to set the example and be the moral guides for the nation. Rabbi Yishmael understood this and so recognized the leadership failings of his family. And yet, he himself did not succumb to their failures and survived. But his survival mandated time in jail.

Rabbi Yishmael had a deep affinity for logic and for grounding every concept and idea in the Written Torah. He believed that the Torah contains its own logical underpinnings, and thus we must study it using our powers of reasoning. If it were possible to reach a particular conclusion by means of human logic, then there would be no reason for the Torah to bother stating the law. He also was of the opinion that the Torah should be interpreted using everyday language and that Torah learning should be accessible to all.⁶ He had a deep understanding of the Torah and a unique insight, which he wanted to make accessible to all those who wanted to learn Torah. Logic, insight and understanding are the traits attributed to him, and so his death is peculiarly painful. It is described in detail in *Eleh Ezkerah*:

מה מאד אָבָה עָלָיו בְּחֶרֶדָה/בֵּת בְּלִיעַל לְקוֹל
בְּכִיתוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל עֲמֻדָה/תֹּאֵר יָפִי בְּלִבָּה
חֲמֻדָה/וְשֹׁאֵלָה מֵאֵת אָבִיהָ חֵיטּוֹ לְהַעֲמִידָה/
נֶאֱמַר בְּלִיעַל דָּבָר זֶה לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ/לְהַפְשִׁיט עוֹרוֹ
מֵעַל פָּנָיו שֹׁאֵלָה מֵאֵתוֹ/וְלֹא עָבַד דָּבָר זֶה
לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ/וְכִשְׁהִגִּיעַ לְמָקוֹם תְּפִלִּין צָרַח בְּקוֹל מֶר
לְיֹצֵר נִשְׁמָתוֹ.

*How very much he trembled as he wept!
The daughter of the wicked one was
silenced by the voice of Rabbi Yishmael's
crying. She coveted his physical beauty
and begged her father to let him live. The*

R. Akiva's Insight

וכשנהרגו רבי שמעון ורבי ישמעאל,
אמר להם רבי עקיבא לתלמידיו. התקינו
עצמכם לפורענות, שאלו טובה עתידה
לבא בדורנו, לא היו מקבלים אותה אלא
רבי שמעון ורבי ישמעאל.

When R. Shimon and
R. Yishmael were killed,
R. Akiva said to his students,
"Prepare yourselves for suffering,
because if our generation was
meant to have positive experiences,
the beneficiaries would have been
R. Shimon and R. Yishmael.
Mechilta to Shemot 22:22

wicked one refused to grant her request! She then asked him to flay Rabbi Yishmael's face and he did not refrain from doing so. When the executioner reached the place of the tefillin, Rabbi Yishmael yelled out a bitter scream to his creator.

While his beauty did not impact him in life, it did play a significant role in his death. There is another individual in the Torah who was also known for his beauty: Yosef Hatzaddik. In Sefer Breishit, chapter 39 verse 6 it is written:

... ויהי יוסף יפה תאר ויפה מראה.
... Behold Yosef was an attractive man.

Rabbi Yishmael was martyred because of the sale of Yosef Hatzaddik, and there seem to be many parallels between the two men. In fact according to kabbalah, Rabbi Yishmael is the reincarnation of

Yosef.⁷ How can we understand this connection?

We must first examine the history of Yosef. When we first meet Yosef, we are told in *Parshat Vayeshev*, (37:2), that he is “ro’eh et echav” — a shepherd of his brothers, and he is “na’ar et bnei Bilha v’et bnei Zilpah” — a lad of his brothers. He shared with his brothers a common profession, but was separate from them as implied by the use of the word “et” in place of the classic word *im* — with. He spoke negatively about his brothers to his father and his brothers hate him, as we are told in verses that follow.

Why do they hate him so? The real reason is because he is beloved by his father who shows his favoritism for Yosef by bestowing upon him a special coat (37:3). Yosef didn’t choose to be the beloved son, he didn’t choose

to have the coat made for him, but Yosef also does nothing to improve the situation or to improve the relationship with his family.

The Torah proceeds to tell us about Yosef’s dream. A dream he chooses to share with his brothers, practically begging them to hear the dream out — *shimu na hachalom hazeh*, please, listen to this dream (37:6). Many commentators say he shared this dream to show his brothers that he wanted to rule over them, but it is possible that this *na’ar*, this young child, just wanted some attention and wanted to know what his brothers think. If we look at the details, we see a boy desperate to have a closeness to his brothers. According to Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Yosef was saying that in his dream, he and his brothers are not divided but united



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When we think of a tzaddik we often think of a perfect person. Why did Yosef warrant to be called tzaddik? Because he was not perfect — tzaddikim aren't born, they develop over time.

and work together. When he tried to bring his sheaf to join the group, it stood up by itself and then everyone's sheaves bowed down to his.⁸

Yosef may not have known what the dream meant, but the brothers immediately viewed this as a threat — their younger brother wanted to rule over them, to be their master. And his brothers hated him for that. Seeing their disdain for him, Yosef had a choice: would he try to bridge this growing gap with them or push them further apart? Yosef makes a choice and tells over his second dream to the brothers, again pushing the vision of him ruling over his family. This cemented his brothers' hatred and jealousy of him (37:8). While his father rebuked Yosef, his brothers go their own way by moving to Shechem, ironically the site of the last recorded dissension between the united brothers and Yaakov.

Yosef's choice to alienate his brothers and his failure to recognize their antipathy led to his brothers selling him into slavery, and eventually, taken to Egypt.⁹ At this juncture, a change comes over Yosef after he is thrown in jail. There, he gains the trust of the chieftain and is placed in charge of two prominent prisoners: Pharaoh's prince of butlers, the *sar hamashkim*, and prince of bakers, *sar ha'ofim*. The Torah, often devoid of expressions of emotions, tells us of a conversation between Yosef and these two prisoners. Sensing one day that

they are troubled, Yosef asks: *madua p'neichem ra'im hayom* — why are you sad? (40:7) His ability to read the situation and appropriately respond to it is improving, as he is able to tease out their dreams.

What is interesting here is that despite Yosef's assistance, the butler forgets about Yosef's request to help him. Why? Because in the midst of interpreting the dreams, Yosef specifically asks the butler to save him and voices a complaint that he had been wrongfully imprisoned and was completely innocent. This complaint was ill timed and ill conceived, and, most important, reflective of his old tendency to be self-absorbed.

In the final act of Yosef's redemption, we see the last stage of his evolution and growth when Pharaoh summons him to interpret his dreams.¹⁰ Here, we see a deeply intuitive, empathetic man emerge. The Torah painstakingly describes Yosef's preparation for this meeting — how he shaves, changes his clothes and heads out to Pharaoh (41:14). Rav Hirsch explains that the Torah goes into such detail to show us Yosef's understanding of what he was facing and what he needed to do in order to properly approach the situation.¹¹

After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Yosef tells him that he should appoint an *ish navon v'chacham* — an individual with deep knowledge and understanding (41:33). At the conclusion of his interpretation,

Pharaoh declares that there is no man with more *binah* or *chachma* than Yosef (41:39).

What are *binah* and *chachmah*? *Chachmah* is intelligence and knowledge. *Binah* is insight and intuition — the ability to assess a situation in its entirety and deduce the appropriate next steps. These are the traits that Yosef now embodies.

It is interesting to note that in Sefer Devarim, chapter 1, verse 13, when Moshe describes the traits of a judge, he says the two most important traits are *chachmah* and *bina*. What does a judge do? He ensures that there is *tzedek*, righteousness, among Am Yisrael. Only someone with *chachmah* and *binah* can truly be called a righteous person, a tzaddik. The Yosef we now know clearly embodies *chachmah* — this is the trait that enabled him to interpret dreams. As for *binah*, the ability to assess a situation and understand what was needed? It took him many trials and tribulations but he eventually achieved this state, which enabled him to save Mitzrayim and reconcile with his family.

This is the story of Yosef; the trials and tribulations that he had to encounter and endure in order to rise up and become Yosef the righteous.

While there are many differences between them, there are striking similarities between Yosef and Rabbi Yishmael. They both came from prominent families who had their challenges. They had to separate from their families to become the leaders they were destined to be. Both of them were beautiful, although this beauty impacted them in different ways. It was their time in jail that enabled their rise to prominence: Yosef because of his understanding of dreams

and Rabbi Yishmael because of his understanding of the Torah and its real-world applications. It is said that Rabbi Yishmael too had *chachmah* and *binah* and wanted to make the Torah accessible to all, and that is what motivated his interpretations of the Torah.¹² Both men also had a strong sense of justice. Yosef knew that his brothers had sinned by enabling him to be sold into slavery, and that the only way for them to really repent for their sin was to experience a similar situation and act differently. This was accomplished when they refused to let Yosef take Binyamin into custody (40:18). Rabbi Yishmael had the same sense of justice.¹³

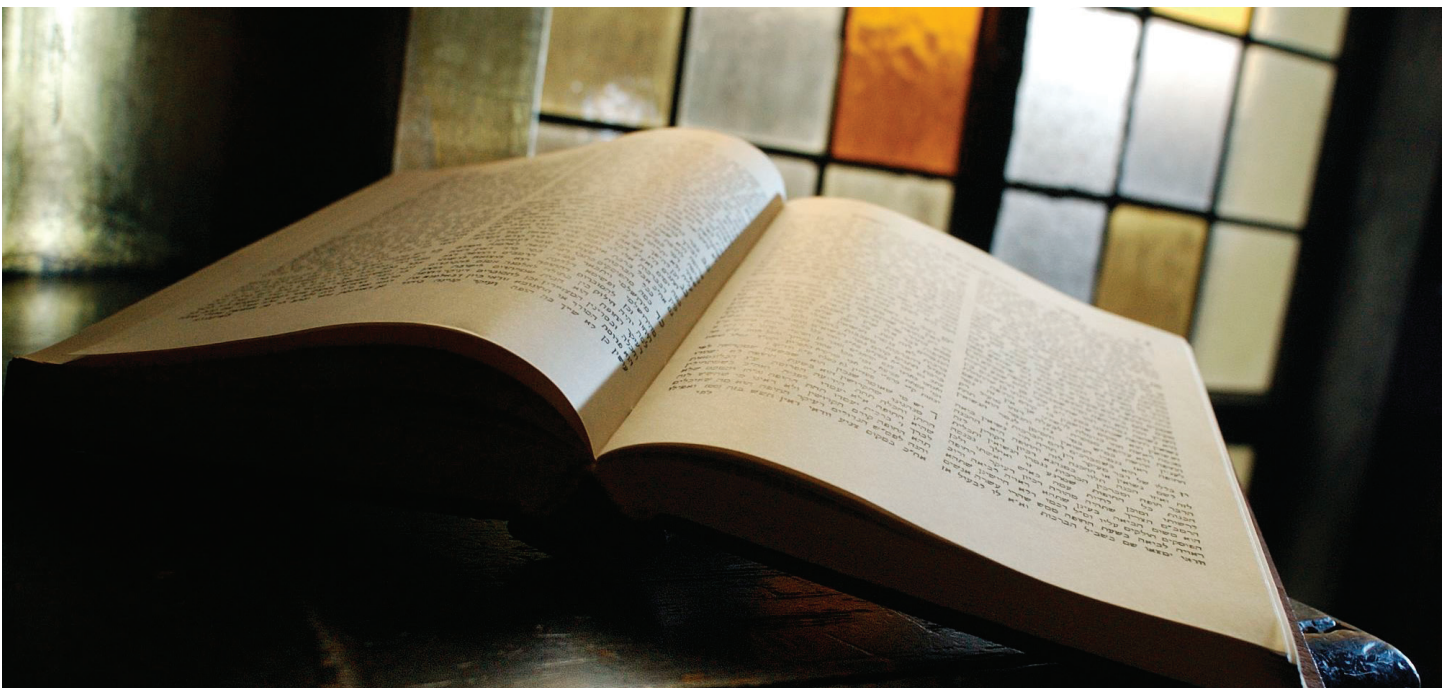
Are the parallels mere coincidence? Or could it be that the kinah is reminding us of not just the story of Yosef, but of Yosef himself. When we think of a tzaddik we often think of a perfect person. Why did Yosef warrant to be called tzaddik? Because he was not perfect — tzaddikim aren't born, they develop over time.

The message to us, therefore, is that we can all strive to be tzaddikim — people who have insight and understanding of people, who develop over time as did Yosef Hatzaddik. This is perhaps why Rabbi Yishmael in particular is singled out as one of the Ten Martyrs, and why we say the kinah of *Eleh Ezkerah*. While the kinah is a source of sadness, perhaps it can also serve as a source of inspiration and hope. Each of the individuals who died had much to teach us about life, not only about death. As individuals we can strive to be tzaddikim like Yosef and make the world a better place through our deep love of and commitment to Torah, and our kindness to and understanding of those around us. And hopefully in that merit, we will herald the coming of the Mashiach and the building of the Beit Hamikdash and no longer sing the kinot out of sadness but only as a source of inspiration.

A thank you to Rabbi Elie Weissman for inspiring this article.

Endnotes

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- 3 *ibid*, p. xxx – xxxi.
- 4 Tosefta, *Sanhedrin* 7:5.
- 5 Lau, B. *The Sages: Character, Content & Creativity*. Maggid Books, Jerusalem. p.212, v.2
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- 7 R. Chaim Vital, *Sha’ar Hagilgulim* ch. 34. English translation available at http://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/1722984/jewish/Rabbi-Yishmael-the-High-Priest-345c.htm.
- 8 Hirsch, R. S.R. *The Pentateuch*, Isaac Levy Publishing, England 1959. vol. 1 p. 542.
- 9 Breishit, chapters 37, 38.
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Are Children Obligated in Observances that Commemorate the Destruction of the Beis HaMikdash?

The Beraisa in *Moed Katan* 26a, teaches us that the obligation to tear one's garments (*keriah*) doesn't only apply when experiencing the loss of a relative. It applies when experiencing other tragic events including seeing the cities of Yehuda, Yerushalayim or the place where the Beis Hamikdash once stood.

What is the nature of the obligation to tear *keriah* upon seeing these places? Perhaps we can glean an insight from the comment of the *Magen Avraham*. The *Magen Avraham* (end of siman 561) writes that a minor who sees the cities of Yehuda does not tear *keriah*, even if he has reached the age of *chinuch* (training). This ruling seems to contradict an explicit law found in the Gemara, *Moed Katan* 14b, that *keriah* should be performed on a child who loses a relative. The Gemara states that the purpose of *keriah* is not for the child per se, but so that those who see the child's torn clothing will express sorrow (*agmas nefesh*). R. Akiva Eger (comments to *Taz*, Y.D. 340:15), notes that if the child has reached the age of *chinuch*, then there is an actual requirement of *keriah*. If the child has not reached the age of *chinuch*, then the *keriah* is only because of *agmas nefesh*. If this is the case, why isn't there an obligation of *keriah* when a minor who reached the age of *chinuch* sees the cities of



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Yehuda, Yerushalayim or the place where the Beis HaMikdash once stood?

Perhaps we could suggest that the nature of the obligation to tear *keriah* upon seeing these places is fundamentally different than the nature of the obligation to tear *keriah* for a loss of a relative. The Shach (*Nekudos HaKesef* to *Taz* Y.D. 340:15) writes that while *chinuch* does apply to tearing *keriah* for the loss of a relative, it does not apply to the observance of mourning. This is based on the statement of the Gemara, *Moed Katan* 26b, “*aveilus lechud keriah lechud*” — the laws of *aveilus* and the laws of *keriah* are two separate domains. Just because the laws of *keriah* apply to a child, does not mean that the laws of *aveilus* apply as well.

The Gemara, *Yevamos* 43b, categorizes the mourning practices that we observe leading up to Tisha B'Av as *aveilus yeshana* — mourning for events that happened a long time ago. The Gemara, *Moed Katan* 20b, also notes that regarding *keriah*, there is a distinction between one who hears

about the death immediately after it takes place (*sh'muah kerova*) and one who hears about it thirty days later (*sh'muah rechokah*). Regarding a *sh'muah rechokah*, there is no inherent obligation to tear *keriah* and the obligation only applies to the loss of a parent in order to honor their death. This law is best explained by a comment in the Gemara, *Moed Katan* 24a, that *keriah* should take place at the *she'as chimum* — at the most intense time of grief.

The *she'as chimum* concept proves that the obligation to tear *keriah* upon seeing Yehuda, Yerushalayim or the Beis HaMikdash is not a function of the formal obligation of *keriah*. *Keriah* only applies at a time of intense grief. The *keriah* that takes place upon seeing Yehuda, Yerushalayim or the Beis HaMikdash does not meet that criteria. We tear *keriah* even though the period of grief was thousands of years ago. One must conclude that the obligation to tear *keriah* upon seeing these places is not a function of *keriah* but of *aveilus* for the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. Since children



do not observe *aveilus*, we can understand why the *Magen Avraham* exempted them from *keriah* upon seeing these places.

Chinuch for Aveilus of Tisha B'Av

The *Mishna Berurah* (*Bei'ur Halacha* 550:1) writes that a child does not have to fast on Tisha B'Av or the other “minor” fasts. This seems to be because these fasts are a function of mourning, and children — even if they reached the age of *chinuch* — don't observe mourning practices.

However, the idea that children are not required to observe mourning practices related to the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash seems to be contradicted by another halacha. The *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 551:14, writes that an adult cannot give a haircut to a child during the week in which Tisha B'Av occurs. The *Magen Avraham* 551:38, asks: if there is no *aveilus* for children, why is it prohibited to cut the child's hair? He answers that public *aveilus* is different. The *Magen Avraham* seems to be saying that while *aveilus* generally doesn't apply to children, it does apply to *aveilus* that the entire *tzibbur* (i.e. all of the Jewish people) participates in. How then can we attribute the exemption of a

child from *keriah* upon seeing Yehuda, Yerushalayim or the Beis HaMikdash to the fact that this type of *keriah* is a function of *aveilus*? Isn't mourning the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash a form of public *aveilus*?

Perhaps the explanation of why it is a prohibited to cut a child's hair the week before Tisha B'Av is not based on *chinuch*. Ordinarily, it is prohibited for an adult to provide a child a prohibited item, whether that activity is prohibited on a biblical level or a rabbinic level (see *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 343 and *Beur Halacha*). However, that is only true when the child is a *bar chiyuva* — he is obligated to observe that particular mitzvah. There is no problem to provide a child with an item that is prohibited to others but not that particular child. [It is prohibited to take a kohen child into a cemetery, but there is no prohibition to take a non-kohen child into a cemetery because the non-kohen is not a *bar chiyuva*.] Therefore, the *Magen Avraham* was bothered by the following problem: if there is no *chinuch* for *aveilus*, then with regards to the prohibition against cutting one's hair, the child is not a *bar chiyuva*. Why then is it prohibited for an adult to cut the child's hair? To this, the *Magen Avraham* answers that because we are dealing with public *aveilus*, every member of the Jewish people is considered a *bar chiyuva*, whether or not they have an actual obligation to observe those laws. As such, while the child himself is personally exempt from any *aveilus* practices related to mourning the Beis HaMikdash, an adult is prohibited from providing a haircut to the child. The *Magen Avraham*, in explaining why an adult may not cut a child's hair, never intended to say that the child himself has any personal obligation of *aveilus*.

This is evident from a ruling of the *Mishna Berurah* 551:82, who writes that the prohibition against cutting a child's hair only applies during the week of Tisha B'Av and not the whole Three Weeks. Ashkenazi practice is to observe many of the Tisha B'Av mourning practices for the entire Three Weeks between Shiva Asar B'Tamuz and Tisha B'Av, including refraining from haircuts. Why doesn't the restriction against adults cutting the hair of children apply the entire Three Weeks? If the restriction against adults cutting the hair of children is based on the child's inherent *chinuch* requirement to observe public forms of *aveilus*, then the child should be trained to do what an adult would do and refrain from haircuts the entire Three Weeks. However, based on our explanation, the restriction against an adult cutting the hair of a child is not based on *chinuch* but rather on the general prohibition against an adult providing a child with a prohibited item. While an adult is prohibited from providing a child with an item that is prohibited on a Torah level or on a rabbinic level, he is not prohibited from providing the child with an item that is prohibited based on *minhag*. For adults, cutting one's hair during the week in which Tisha B'Av occurs is a rabbinic prohibition. Refraining from cutting one's hair the whole Three Weeks is based on *minhag*. Therefore, the adult may not provide a child with a haircut during the week in which Tisha B'Av occurs, but may provide a haircut during the Three Weeks.

Meat and Wine During the Nine Days

If children don't observe the laws of mourning, why does the *Magen*

Avraham 551:31, write that children should not eat meat or drink wine during the Nine Days? One must conclude that the practice of refraining from meat or wine during the Nine Days is not a function of *aveilus*. A number of poskim (Maharil, the Vilna Gaon, and the *Aruch HaShulchan*, O.C. 551:9) note that the practice is based on a statement of the Gemara:

ת"ר כשחרב הבית בשניה רבו פרושין בישראל שלא לאכול בשר ושלא לשתות יין נטפל להן ר' יהושע אמר להן בני מפני מה אי אתם אוכלין בשר ואין אתם שותין יין אמרו לו נאכל בשר שממנו מקריבין על גבי מזבח ועכשיו בטל נשתה יין שמנסכין על גבי המזבח ועכשיו בטל אמר להם א"כ לחם לא נאכל שכבר בטלו מנחות ... פירות לא נאכל שכבר בטלו בכורים ... אמר להן בני בואו ואומר לכם שלא להתאבל כל עיקר אי אפשר שכבר נגזרה גזרה ולהתאבל יותר מדאי אי אפשר שאין גוזרין גזירה על הצבור אא"כ רוב צבור יכולין לעמוד בה ... אלא כך אמרו חכמים סד אדם את ביתו בסיד ומשייר בו דבר מועט ... מאי היא שנאמר אם אשכחך ירושלים תשכח ימיני תדבק לשוני לחכי וגו'.

Our rabbis taught: when the Second Temple was destroyed, there were many ascetics among the Jewish people who refrained from eating meat or drinking wine. R. Yehoshua approached them and said to them, "My children, why are you refraining from eating meat and drinking wine?" They said, "We should eat meat from which sacrifices are offered on the Altar and has now ceased? We should drink wine which was used for libations on the Altar and has now ceased?" [R. Yehoshua] said to them, "If so, we should not eat bread because the flour offerings have ceased ... We shouldn't eat fruit

because bikkurim have ceased." ... He said to them, "My children, come and I will tell you: We can't refrain from mourning altogether because there was a decree against us. We can't have excessive mourning because one cannot impose a decree on the public unless most of the public can keep it. ... Rather, our rabbis said that a person should plaster his house with plaster and leave a small part of it [without plaster]." ... [The source for these practices is] as it states "If I forget Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my pallet, etc."

Bava Basra 60b

R. Yehoshua's primary objection to refraining from eating meat and drinking wine was that it was not a reasonable response to the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. It is not something that can be observed by most people. However, refraining from meat and wine during the Nine Days is reasonable and that is why we have the practice to do so. Yet the Gemara notes that the source for the practices that are meant to commemorate the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash is "*im eshkachech Yerushalayim*" — if I forget Jerusalem etc. This is similar to the comment of the Gemara, *Rosh HaShanah* 30a, that the reason why we have certain mitzvos that are performed *zecher LaMikdash* (in remembrance of the Temple) is because we have an obligation to seek out and remember Yerushalayim. As such, one can suggest that the practices that R. Yehoshua was discussing are not a function of *aveilus* but a function of our obligation to

seek out and remember the Beis HaMikdash. Children have no obligation to observe *aveilus*, but if they have reached the age of *chinuch* they have an obligation to seek out and remember the Beis HaMikdash. Therefore, they must also refrain from eating meat and drinking wine during the Nine Days.

In summary, we find three different categories of halacha relating to tragedy and loss. Children are not obligated to observe *aveilus*, whether it applies to mourning the loss of a relative or mourning the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. They are exempt from practices during the Three Weeks that are strictly a function of *aveilus*. *Keriah* that takes place at the time of a loss applies to children. If it is in response to a tragedy or loss that took place previously, such as *keriah* upon seeing Yehuda, Yerushalayim or the Beis HaMikdash, then the obligation is rooted in *aveilus* and children are exempt. Practices that are rooted in seeking out the Beis HaMikdash and remembering its destruction are not a function of *aveilus* and are applicable to children. Therefore, they cannot eat meat or drink wine during the Nine Days.

May it be His will that we will merit seeing the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash when all of these discussions will be hypothetical rather than practical, and the fast of Tisha B'Av will be transformed into a yom tov.



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Shining the Light of Torah with Pride

ותשא כל העדה ויתנו את קולם ויבכו העם
בלילה ההוא אמר ר' יוחנן תשעה
באב היה אמר להם הקב"ה אתם בכיתם בכיה
של חנם ואני קובע לכם בכיה לדורות.

[And it is further written:] "And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried and the people wept that night" (Numbers 14:1). Rabba said that Rabbi Yochanan said: That night was the night of the Ninth of Av. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: You wept needlessly that night, and I will therefore establish for you a true tragedy over which there will be weeping in future generations.

Taanit 29a (Translation: The William Davidson digital edition of the Koren Noé Talmud)

When the spies returned from their survey of the land Hashem promised to nation Israel, they reported that the nations who are settled there were too powerful to be conquered. That night, the ninth of Av, the people cried and proposed returning to Egypt. Hashem responded, "You cried for no valid reason, I will therefore designate this date for mourning the destruction of both Temples."

Lack of faith in Hashem's omnipotence and lack of trust in the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu sealed the doom of the generation that Hashem freed from Egyptian bondage. Nobody except Yehoshua and Calev would settle in the Land of Israel.



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The Midrash Rabbah calls attention to a personality flaw that led the spies astray. When the spies offered their report, they said:

וַנִּהְיֶינָה בְּעֵינֵינוּ כְּחַגְגָּבִים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם.
We looked like grasshoppers to ourselves,
and so we must have looked to them.

Bamidbar 13:33

The Midrash comments:

אמרו ונהי בעינינו כחגבים אמר הקב"ה
ויתרתי עליהם אלא וכן היינו בעיניהם יודעים
הייתם מה עשיתי אתכם לעיניהם מי יאמר
שלא הייתם בעיניהם כמלאכים.

They said, "We looked like grasshoppers to ourselves," The Holy One, Blessed be He said, "I forgave them for that." Rather [what did they say that was so offensive?] "and so we must have looked to them." [Hashem said] "You knew what I did to you in their eyes? Who is to say that you didn't appear before them like angels?"

Bamidbar Rabbah 16:11

How do you know what they thought of you, of nation Israel that I redeemed from Egyptian bondage and took care of in the desert? Maybe they thought of you as angels of Hashem!

The spies had a fundamental flaw.

They had a perception that they appeared inferior and they didn't believe that Hashem would help overcome that perception. This flaw continues to plague us today. We have a Torah overflowing with wisdom and an ability to bring people closer to Hashem. But we are afraid to promote it. We could see ourselves as angels of Hashem but instead we consider ourselves to be grasshoppers in the eyes of others.

One of the biggest challenges of our times is intermarriage. Recent surveys have shown that among non-Orthodox Jews, 80 percent of those aged 25–54 are either intermarried or not married at all. If nothing is done, we will lose millions of Jews from nation Israel.

We are not grasshoppers. We are the *mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh* — a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We have the ability to shine the light of Torah on those who have not yet felt it and we should be confident that our message will have an impact.

In the past, we have been silent. We should have asked the leadership of the broader Jewish community,

“Where are your grandchildren and great-grandchildren headed? We cannot survive as a nation with such a high intermarriage rate.” We were too focused on ourselves and our own communities. We became apathetic and we lacked the confidence to share this message with the Jews of America. We have to find a way for Jews of all walks of life to appreciate the beauty of Torah and its system of laws that greatly enhances our lives.

מי האיש החכם ויבן את זאת ואשר דבר פי ה' אליו ויגדה על מה אבדה הארץ נצתה כמדבר מפלי עבר ויאמר ה' על עזבם את תורת אשר נתתי לפניהם ולא שמעו בקולי ולא הלכו בה.
Who is the wise person that can understand this? Who does God speak to that can tell? Why was the land lost, [why has it] become parched like a desert with no passersby? God said, it is because they abandoned My Torah that I gave before them and they didn't listen to My voice and they didn't follow it.

Yirmiyahu 9:11-12

The Talmud has an enigmatic comment on these verses:

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב מאי דכתיב מי האיש החכם ויבן את זאת דבר זה נשאל לחכמים ולנביאים ולא פירשוהו עד שפירשו הקב"ה בעצמו דכתיב ויאמר ה' על עזבם את תורת וגו' היינו לא שמעו בקולי היינו לא הלכו בה אמר רב יהודה אמר רב שאין מברכין בתורה תחלה.

R. Yehuda said in the name of Rav, What is meant by the verse, “Who is the wise person that can understand this?” This question was posed to the scholars and to the prophets and they couldn't give an answer until God himself gave an answer as it states, “God said, it is because they abandoned My Torah etc.”

Isn't this the same as “they didn't listen to My voice and they didn't follow it”? R. Yehuda said in the name of Rav, they didn't recite a blessing on the Torah first.
Nedarim 81a

Which blessing did they omit? The Bach, Orach Chaim no. 47, suggests that it was the beracha that states:

אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים ונתן לנו את תורתו.

He who has chosen us from among the nations and gave us the Torah.

We have to take pride in the fact that we are the chosen nation of Hashem. He chose us to receive His Torah and to be a “light unto the nations of the world.” It is our assignment to cry out in the name of Hashem, creator of heaven and earth.

It is the “grasshopper mentality” that causes us to omit this beracha. The social philosophy that dominates current thinking says, “How can you be so discriminatory to think you are the chosen nation?” This mentality contributes to the growing intermarriage rate. People have the attitude that when looking for a spouse, limiting one's options to Jewish spouses is somehow

discriminatory. We have to take pride in the fact that we are the chosen nation of Hashem. He chose us to receive His Torah and to be a “light unto the nations of the world.” It is our assignment to cry out in the name of Hashem, creator of heaven and earth.

כי שתיים רעות עשה עמי אתי עזבו מקור מים חיים לחצב להם בארות נשברים אשר לא יכלו המים.

Two evils did My nation commit. They rejected Me, their source of life-giving waters, to dig wells that cannot provide any water.

Yirmiyahu 2:13

We can't allow Torah Judaism to be replaced by the social philosophy of today. The solution to declining membership is not to rethink our position on intermarriage or to erode the appropriate halachic obligations relating to conversion. The Torah is not a social philosophy. It is a set of laws that instructs us how to raise families, establish communities and conduct the affairs of nations.

It is our job to teach that message. We have the ability to shine the light of Torah on our brothers and sisters who struggle to see it. We should be proud of what we have to offer and we should feel confident when sharing it with others.

כי הנה החשך יכסה ארץ וערפל לאמים ועליה יזרח ה' וכבודו עליה יראה

Darkness may cover the earth, and clouds may darken the lives of nations, but the light and glory of Hashem shall shine on nation Israel.

Yeshayahu 60:2



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Dr. Moshe Tendler at <http://www.yutorah.org/Rabbi-Moshe-D-Tendler>

Perspectives on Jewish Life in Diaspora Communities

Tisha B'Av is an opportune time to reflect on *galut* (exile) and what it means for the Jewish people. Different communities experience *galut* in different ways. We are honored to share the perspectives of a number of rabbis throughout the world as they reflect on *galut* in general, the specific challenges in their region and how they address them, and the relationship of their communities to Israel and Aliyah.

Introduction



Chief Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein
Chief Rabbi, South Africa

Every Diaspora community faces unique challenges and opportunities, which are deeply rooted in the particular circumstances and history of the country in which it lives. The South African Jewish community lives in the context of a young democracy born in the aftermath of the evil and the suffering of apartheid. As each Diaspora community seeks to navigate its unique circumstances, we should all do so using the Torah as our compass, as the Mishna states (*Avot* ch. 5), “Turn it over and over for everything is in it [Torah].” So in South Africa we are guided by the Torah values of the equality of all human beings, as the Mishna (*Avot* ch. 3) says, “Beloved is the human being created in G-d’s image”; the imperative of alleviating human suffering, as the verse (*Tehillim* 145:9) states, “And His compassion extends to all His creatures”; and the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem, among many others.

While every community finds itself in very unique conditions, it is vital for all of us to feel that we are part

of one entity called Klal Yisrael, which transcends the location, culture, language and history of any one country. Our identity cannot be defined by the nationality of a particular Jewish community in which we happen to live. Our identity transcends circumstances, and is instead defined by the bonds that bind every Jew in the world to each other. These bonds do not emerge from mere narrow Jewish ethnicity and culture — they are created by our covenant with G-d.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, in his foundational essay, “*Kol Dodi Dofek*,” identified two distinct covenants between G-d and the Jewish people: the “covenant of fate” and the “covenant of destiny.” G-d entered into the covenant of fate with us while we were still subject to Egyptian slavery when He said, “I will take you to be a nation.” Through this covenant, we became a separate people with a shared and supernatural fate for all time, and from which there is no escape.

In the last 80 years, for example, we have seen the irresistible power of this covenantal shared fate as Nazi Germany sought to annihilate assimilated and religious Jews alike. And today, the covenant of fate binds all Jews, willingly or unwillingly, to the

State of Israel and to the events and pressures that accompany anything to do with it. Every Jewish community around the world has been thrust to the frontlines, facing the anti-Israel onslaught, which, in its milder form, can mean being denigrated and isolated, and in its most virulent form can actually pose a serious threat to life and limb.

Rav Soloveitchik explained that the covenant of fate binds us and imposes on us a moral responsibility towards one another’s welfare. Every Jew must stand in solidarity with — and help, support and protect — every Jew unconditionally, irrespective of political affiliation, religious observance, or any other criteria. The all-encompassing covenant of fate connects us all, giving expression to the very concept of Jewish peoplehood and unity.

The covenant of destiny goes beyond the covenant of fate, which simply binds us as a nation through force of external circumstances. The covenant of destiny — known also as the “covenant of Sinai” because it was entered into at Mount Sinai when G-d gave us the Torah — is about our shared values, moral vision and the Divine mission of the Jewish people. It comprises the Torah’s principles and values and calls us to a higher destiny,

one that transcends mere survival. It is about *why* we want to survive, and what our purpose and moral calling is. It gives us our mission, articulating the *raison d'être* of the Jewish people.

These two covenants bind Jewish communities throughout the world, scattered throughout the Diaspora, and of course, with Jews at the centre of the Jewish world — the State of Israel. We have all felt the pull of both of these covenants. Sometimes it is the pull of the covenant of fate, such as when Naftali Frankel, Gilad Shaer and Eyal Yifrach were kidnapped, or during one of the Gaza wars, or in the aftermath of any terror attack in Israel.

We also feel the pull of the covenant of destiny. I have seen this in such a powerful and positive way through the experience of The Shabbat Project, which began in South Africa in 2013, and which last year reached Jewish communities in 1,152 cities in 95 countries. During the course of this project, I have seen the spiritually magnetic connection between one Jew and another, and between all of us and our national mission and destiny, symbolised by Shabbat. The Shabbat Project has seen major Jewish communities across the world — from Sydney and Los Angeles to Paris and Buenos Aires — moved on a large scale. But it has also seen Jews in far-flung corners of the world reconnect with what it means to be a Jew, because Shabbat pulled on their souls. Whether it was Abir Schweizer from Conway, Arkansas, who wrote that when you keep Shabbat — even if you are the only Jew in the town — you are never alone in the world; or Faisal Benkhald, from Karachi, Pakistan, who connected with the project alone in a hostile environment; or Keli Rae from Fernley, Nevada, who thought

she and her family were the only Jews in the town, only to discover seven other families.

It is the calling of all Jewish leadership to nurture and to strengthen, in all our Diaspora communities and in Israel, the idea of Jewish peoplehood, of the fact that we are a part of the broader Klal Yisrael, and that we are connected to our fellow Jews through these two great covenants.

The bonds between Diaspora Jewry and Israeli Jewry are important for both. One factor in the warm reception that The Shabbat Project has received in Israel — where it has been active in more than 100 towns and cities across the length and breadth of the country, uniting religious and secular around our shared heritage of Shabbat — is the fact that it is a project that connects with Jews throughout the world. It has resonated with Israelis' deep desire to feel part of a global community, which is Klal Yisrael. This explains the unprecedented embrace of the project by even the IDF, which sees itself not only as the defence force of Israel, but indeed of all Jews, wherever they may be.

During the three weeks of mourning in the lead-up to Tisha b'Av, we are reminded that *galut* has its roots in the fragmentation of the Jewish people, the shattering of unity and shared brotherhood and sisterhood. Therefore, *geulah* has its roots in restoring Jewish peoplehood, unity and cohesion. Let us do everything we can to bring Jews together, through our two covenants with G-d, so that we can truly become one united Klal Yisrael, who can merit the Final Redemption coming to our world — may it come soon, please G-d.

Communal Challenges and Solutions



Rabbi Arie Folger '02R
Chief Rabbi, Vienna,
Austria

Before World War II, Vienna had some 200,000 Jews which comprised most of Austria's Jewish population of 245,000. Of those, about 65,000 were murdered by the Nazis, while most of the rest fled. After the war, Austria took a long time to come to terms with its culpability in the Holocaust. Jews settled in the initially small reconstructed community despite not being welcome. Under such circumstances, it was hard to develop the community.

All that changed over time, as on the one hand, many Jews from southern Soviet republics, mostly Uzbekistan (Bukhara, Samarkan), Georgia (Gruzia) and Kazakhstan settled in Vienna. On the other hand, Austria came to terms with its role in the Holocaust and our community's president managed, through tough negotiations, to obtain funding guarantees that allowed Jews to develop the community and build, among other things, a state-of-the-art K-12 Jewish school, an old-age home and a sports center.

It is now much easier to lead the community into the future, but we do face some very specific challenges. We owe a debt to the prewar community, but we must beware of becoming stuck in the past. We could run all day from one Holocaust remembrance event to another, but that would irresponsibly sacrifice our present and future to the past. However, we clearly owe that debt to the past. We must thus carefully

balance Holocaust remembrance and preservation of historic sites with our responsibility to be part of and contribute to the Jewish future. Which brings us to the next set of challenges: presently, about 60 percent of Jewish kids avail themselves of the Jewish educational institutions. That is comparatively very high, but not yet enough; every Jewish child deserves to discover and study Torah and become inspired to be part of the Jewish future, but not every child has that exposure at present.

Furthermore, since our community is an amalgam of the descendants of Viennese Yekkes, Hungarian and Polish Holocaust survivors, as well as the above-mentioned later Asian Sefardi immigrants, we still have much work to do to strengthen Jewish unity and inclusion.

To address these challenges, our school has both Ashkenazi and Sefardi teachers, and the other Jewish schools also make an effort to integrate children of all families. Through positive programming we try to give the kids a decent Jewish education and we hope to increase the offering of additional hours of religious instruction. We also run programs to strengthen our bond with the students who are already receiving Jewish education, such as a Friday evening davening and dinner event we recently held for the three upper



The Synagogue in Vienna

grades of our community's school.

In parallel, we run other events specifically targeting kids outside the community's formal educational programs, such as Friday evening programs that target the Jewish students of the French Lycée, where we also offer two weekly periods of *limudei kodesh*, a highly unusual achievement at French schools, where *laïcité* (French secularism) usually requires a much greater separation of church and state. Austrian education law made this possible.

However, we are aware that too many kids fall through the cracks, and we expect to begin analyzing why some kids leave our Jewish high school — which provides a very good secular education too — and in which schools they end up. Our goals are twofold: we want to prevent kids from dropping out, and we want to reach out to those who did drop out.

In addition, we are also spearheading programs on the university level: courses in Jewish education for people studying education are being launched as we speak, and we intend to do more for students in other departments. We are also involved with the Jewish students' union, and there are a few additional initiatives in town, including a yeshiva for young men studying at university. I also detect a gap in our offering for young women and hope to find partners with whom to address this need.

Finally, we also run some important programs for adults, including some for people who are not strongly connected to the community. One leading program bringing those who are very active together with those who are quite less active to the same table is the Shabbos Project, which in Vienna is now entering its fourth year.

Vienna and Israel

Our community is strongly connected to Israel, and many students decide, upon graduating high school or university, to either spend a gap year in Israel, study there, or make Aliya. Even those who come back will maintain a strong connection to Israel, which is only a three-hour flight from Vienna. We have close ties with the Israeli embassy, attend each other's programs and participate actively. We run a program with Birthright, advertise some programs in Israel, and I regularly mention in my speeches that Israel is where we ought to be. We do not run any formal program to promote Aliya.

We should also note that there is a sizeable Israeli expat community in Vienna. One of our challenges is to attract that demographic, which isn't used to affiliating with a Jewish community, and parts of which even see itself in starkly secular terms. This is a work in progress.

There is a special kind of Aliya that our members participate in disproportionately: many Viennese Jews, obviously provided they can afford it, own a second home in Israel, which is used for vacation, or is rented out, contributing to *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* by increasing the available housing units. On Yom Tov, many of our synagogues empty out, and congregants spend the holidays in Israel. It definitely beats spending Pesach in Cancun, all the more so does it beat spending Pesach holidays in a non-kosher hotel, which, as I had to learn over the years, is unfortunately not so uncommon.

Planting the Light of Torah in the Heartland



Rabbi Dani Rockoff
Rabbi, Cong BIAV,
Overland Park, KS

The *galut* challenges in our area of Kansas City are in some ways similar to any place outside of Israel. We live in a very comfortable suburban American neighborhood, with nice houses and lawns, courteous locals, and little traffic and congestion. We have a very nice shul and community, and families can raise their children very comfortably. In this sense, we

experience the “rivers of Babylon” *galut*. We are a relatively established Jewish area outside of Israel.

In other ways, we have a unique *galut* experience in that we still “feel” what it means to live in *galut*. We do not have the full array of Jewish resources that are available in Israel, or even those available in larger Jewish metropolitan areas. There is not the abundance of kosher restaurants, yeshivot and kollelim. We have the basic resources but there is still the sense that we are far away from the Jewish centers of the world. Even with today’s air travel, the distance to Israel on a plane is still just one leg longer when it requires a stopover.

We address the challenge of *galut*

in our area by devoting communal efforts to our shul, day school, kollel, kashrut, and many other Judaic programs to strengthen ourselves and to provide a strong foundation for the next generation.

We are also in the unique position of, hopefully, being a “light unto the nations” in the *galut* by acting in a manner that is a Kiddush Hashem. Our community is very hospitable to travelers from around the world who come here for work or travel. We are frequented regularly by kashrut professionals and a surprising number of business professionals from Chicago, New York, and Israel.

Another unique opportunity we have living in our region is to provide

Kansas City and Israel - A Historic Connection

Our community has always been very supportive of Israel, especially political action. Ranging from Rabbi Simon Glazer’s role in advocating for President Harding to support the Palestine Resolution in 1921 (upholding the Balfour Declaration), to Eddie Jacobson interceding with President Truman to have the United States recognize the State of Israel, to today’s very active AIPAC efforts, our region has been an important juggernaut in pro-Israel advocacy. This is especially important as there is a disproportionate impact that Jews in regions such as ours can have in supporting Israel, compared with more populous Jewish areas.

Beyond political activity, we currently make sure that there are religious celebrations and recognitions of modern-day Israel. We hold a *tefillah chagigit* for Yom Haatzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. We also have special programming

that reflects not just the culture of modern-day Israel but that highlights the religious experience and what it means to us today.



Aliyah is an important value in our community. Over the years, several families have made Aliyah, including a few former rabbis of our shul. We have hired *shlichim* to teach in the day school, and, for a number of years, there was a Torah Mitzion Kollel.

In terms of Aliyah as a priority, I have shared with the community that moving to Israel should be seriously considered. If an individual or family wishes to have a more

robust religious environment, Israel should be the top option. *Ki miTziyon teitzei Torah*, “from Zion, the Torah comes forth,” is an increasingly relevant term in the practical sense beyond an aspirational prayer. In addition, moving to Israel is the singular opportunity to realize the dream of generations of Jews who lived in the *galut*: to return to our people’s homeland.

For those who are not able to make Aliyah, our community provides a unique opportunity for individuals and families to contribute as Jews in the Diaspora. There are not an overabundance of committed Jews and resources, and therefore everyone’s contributions count. On the other hand, there is much great work that can be done to be *mekadesh shem shamayim* and cultivate the next generation of Jews, until the coming of Mashiach, may he come speedily in our day.

a portal of entry for converts to Judaism. The Gemara in *Pesachim* (87b) teaches:

אמר ר' אלעזר לא הגלה הקב"ה את
ישראל לבין האומות אלא כדי שיתוספו
עליהם גרים.

R' Elazar says: The Jewish people were exiled among the nations to add converts to their ranks.

There are many non-Jews who seek to join the Jewish people in

our area. Many of these sincere individuals and their families have made this inspiring commitment to convert. Several are among the most committed and active members of our community, and others continue to raise their families and contribute to the Jewish people in Israel or other communities. This is a very important role we play as a community in the Diaspora.

Rebuilding a Community from the Ashes



Rabbi Dani Fabian

Director of Youth Programs, Lauder Yeshurun, Germany

Approximately 200,000 Jews, most of whom were from Eastern Europe, lived in German DP camps after World War II ended in 1945. The majority of them could not imagine staying permanently in Germany or Eastern Europe and rebuild what the Nazi regime had destroyed. When opportunities opened up, those who could, left for the United States, and the vast majority in 1948 for the State of Israel. Of the 200,000 survivors only 15,000 remained in Germany. In the following years, around 15 Jewish communities were refounded in the major German cities, including Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich, as well as a few smaller cities. Given the fact that those who stayed were few in number, the question of religious denomination was solved by instituting the concept of the so-called "*Einheitsgemeinde*" — a unified, non-denominational community and shul that enables all community members to be part of the same community and to daven in the same shul. This

resulted in Jewish communities in which the majority of the members were non-observant Jews, praying together in a shul with an Orthodox liturgy. In the following decades, the Jewish communities were not thriving. Assimilation was taking its toll and many young Jews were finding suitable marriage partners outside of the community. Even with the immigration of Romanian, Hungarian and Czechoslovak Jews in the 1950s and 60s, Jewish life never recovered to anywhere near its former state, leaving the Jewish population in the late 80's at around 30,000 in around 20 Jewish communities.

With the beginning of the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, the Jewish landscape in Germany changed dramatically. It was the German government's policy to spread the new immigrants to cities and villages throughout all of Germany, and also to confine them to these cities by limiting the eligibility of social welfare to those staying in



The German Community and Israel

The German Jewish community in general has very strong ties to the Land of Israel. Many Jews in Germany feel, even now, living in the country that initiated and executed the murder of 6 million Jews, that Israel is necessary as a place of refuge if things get dangerous again. German Jews of Eastern European background who lived in Germany for two or more generations therefore support the Land of Israel financially, feel strong solidarity with the State of Israel, and stand up to protect its political interests. Most Jews who immigrated to Germany from the former Soviet Union feel less connected to the Land of Israel, having consciously decided not to settle in Israel when the iron curtain fell.

Given Germany's leading role in today's world economy and the high quality of life, most Jews have settled in Germany without plans to leave. Also, the government's strong support not only for Israel but for Jewish life in Germany makes it possible for Jews to stay, imagining, and living a Jewish life in Germany. As a result, Aliyah rates are low in comparison with other European countries. If the political situation in Germany should change, most Jews would consider Israel their primary choice as a permanent residence.

the designated places. With virtually none of the academic degrees of the former Soviet Union being recognized by German academic standards, and with a foreign language to be learned, the immigrants could not find suitable employment for many years. Additionally, decades of socialism had done its part to destroy most of the Jewish knowledge and traditions of an entire generation. So while more than 100,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union immigrated to Germany and registered in the existing communities, or founded new communities in their respective new home towns, the Jewish population in Germany was faced not only with an opportunity but also with various challenges. How to build a Jewish identity and how to educate Jews who had experienced decades of social exclusion and disadvantages because of being Jewish? How to promote Jewish life in a country with now more than 80 Jewish communities, where more than two-thirds of the members were older than 50 and very few started new families? And who of the existing Jewish population would be

Today, most of these communities have been reduced in membership; integration of the children of immigrants into secular German life — with all its opportunities — has succeeded, and assimilation is taking its toll.

their role models?

Today, most of these communities have been reduced in membership; integration of the children of immigrants into secular German life — with all its opportunities — has succeeded, and assimilation is taking its toll.

Our contribution to the specific challenges of the German Jewish community is to provide authentic and inspiring Jewish experiences as well as Jewish education through suitable role models.

For more than seventeen years, the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and its partner organization, Lauder Yeshurun, have run a large variety of educational and experiential formal and informal initiatives in Germany. Based in Berlin, the formation of a Jewish kindergarten, a yeshiva, a girls seminary and a Jewish school have had a positive impact on the Jewish population of Berlin and beyond for many years. Today's outreach initiatives such as JCommunity, Morasha and the Lauder E-Learning school enable children, teenagers and students, who often don't have any access to Jewish learning in their home towns, to participate in live online classes every week. Programs include weekend seminars, summer and winter Machanot, and trips to Israel and America to connect to other Jews worldwide and experience Jewish life. Over the years, all of these initiatives have enabled hundreds of Jews to embrace a traditional Jewish lifestyle, settling in various major communities worldwide as well as founding a traditional Jewish community in Berlin with more than 75 families and more than 300 members.

The Jewish Community of Brazil



Rabbi Saul Paves
Headmaster, Colégio lavne and Community Rabbi, Kehillat Mizrachi

São Paulo, Brazil

Sao Paulo's Jewish community, far away in Brazil, is facing challenges and dilemmas similar to those faced by many small communities around America.

Chazara biTshuva and Kiruv

In the last two-to-three decades, we saw a growing movement of kiruv and *chazara bitshuva*. This movement, headed mainly by Chabad and Haredi rabbis, has had a strong impact in terms of stopping the increase of assimilation rates, and has succeeded in bringing many Jews back to Torah and tradition.

In these movements, the main agenda is Torah learning and keeping mitzvot. This focus strongly impacts how the community relates to Medinat Israel. In some cases, it involves the omission of talking about the State of Israel as a principle component of our *geulah*, or as the central aspect of Jewish life after the Shoah. In other cases, the community is exposed to an open policy against the establishment of Medinat Israel, with its secular leadership, a society that is not built and guided by Torah. The Haredi and Chabad rabbis consider Eretz Israel a holy place, a Torah place for its yeshivot, and the place where our gedolim, the great rabbanim, live and lead our people, and for the religious life that is possible there. At the same time, their relationship to the State of Israel is often neutral, at best.

High rates of Assimilation; Apathy and illiteracy about Judaism

Another main issue that we face in the Brazilian community is Jewish illiteracy. The high rates of assimilation and the exit from the Jewish community by many of our brothers and sisters indicate, at some level, apathy toward Judaism and

ignorance about our history, tradition and values.

In the last 25 years, we are facing a decrease of almost 50 percent in the total number of Jews attending day schools. These children are growing up in a completely assimilated atmosphere, with almost no knowledge about Judaism. Assimilation is a natural result for these children.



The Increase of Aliyah from Brazil

National political scandals and an economic crisis strongly affected our community. In the last three years, dozens of families made Aliyah. The numbers are very high (an increase of almost 90 percent in 2016) and this new trend forced the Jewish Agency to reorganize the process regarding Brazilian Jewish Aliyah.

Many of these families were motivated by practical reasons. Jews from different backgrounds and affiliations find their way to Israel as their first choice when they decide that they have to leave Brazil. They choose to live there regardless of their ideological position on Israel or level of participation in Jewish community.

This new trend gives us the feeling

of the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy:

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים וְקִבְּצָתִי אֶתְכֶם
מִן הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר נְפוּצֶתֶם בָּם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה
וּבְחֹרֶעַ נְטִיָּה וּבְחִמָּה שְׂפוּכָה.

With a strong hand and outstretched arm and overflowing fury I will bring you out from the people and gather you from the lands where you are scattered"

Yechezkel 20:34.

At certain crossroads of history, Hashem makes us leave behind all theoretical and ideological debates and sharply takes us from *galut*, bringing back His people to the Land of Israel. G-d awakens us from our apathy and reminds us to direct our views and dreams to Jerusalem. His "strong hand" quickly overturns the lasting status quo of *galut*.

Fighting the Anti-Israel Campaign in Brazil

For many secular Jews of past generations, the State of Israel played a central role in their identity and connected them to the Jewish people. Leaders spoke about Israel with pride, as a model and example of achievement and the ability to overcome adversity. These speeches inspired Jews who felt a deep and strong connection to Israel, even without religious ties.

The latest military campaigns and the Palestinian propaganda have fostered a strong anti-Israel feeling in the media and public opinion. Although our leadership continues to promote the State, the ongoing media bias against Israel and popular empathy toward the Palestinian people has harmed the relationship between many Jews and the State of Israel.

These examples offer a general picture of our community. Like many other small communities, we lack a strong, organized and proactive Religious Zionist Modern Orthodox community. This type of community would be a strong representative of Medinat Israel, providing perspective and meaning as a historical, prophetic and national place for our People and our future.

A Religious Zionist Modern Orthodox community could operate as a bridge between different sectors in the community, strengthening Jewish feeling and giving Jews the sense of belonging to a broad entity of Am Israel. The lack of this kind of community intensifies the polarization between Jews and Israel, as described above.



The Aliyah Challenge

Rabbi Daniel Korobkin

Senior Rabbi, Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto

How is one supposed to know when it's time to make Aliyah? There will always be a loose end here or there, whether it be a familial duty or a job-related challenge that keeps us in galut. If there never is a perfect time, how are we to know when it's the "right" time? This should, perhaps, be one of the most important existential questions that Diaspora Jews asks themselves on a regular basis.

A beautiful midrash tells us that when Yaakov first came to Egypt, he brought cedar saplings with him from Eretz Israel and planted them in the Diaspora community of Goshen. These trees would grow thick and tall over the decades, and would eventually be used to build the Mishkan once the Jews left Egypt. But why was it necessary to schlepp trees with us out of Egypt? Why couldn't the Jews have purchased cedar lumber from itinerant peddlers in the desert, just as they procured so many of the other materials for the Mishkan?

Yaakov wanted his children and grandchildren to grow up seeing the cedars of Eretz Israel in their backyards. He wanted them to see cedars swaying in the wind, buckling under the stress and burden of the elements, yet never giving up and always returning to their proud and tall state. He also wanted

his children to remember Eretz Israel daily; all they needed to do was to look in their backyards and see the cedars of Israel growing tall. This would remind them that no matter how settled they felt in Goshen, their destiny and homeland lay elsewhere.

This is the question that our congregation and congregations all over North America must ask: Where are our cedar trees? What elements in our daily lives remind us regularly that our destiny and homeland is in the modern State of Israel? When those cedar trees are clearly visible, the question of when is the right time to make Aliyah will become easier to answer.

Although every individual must answer these questions for themselves, I am proud to be living and serving the Thornhill, Ontario Jewish community, which has one of the highest Aliyah rates per capita in all the world. I am happy to report that our children are our most visible cedar trees. Our youth study in yeshivot and seminaries in Israel, and a high percentage of them serve in the IDF or do Sherut Leumi. Many of our families own second homes in Israel, and are spending more and more time there, as their financial and social conditions permit.

We annually host a group of bar and bat mitzvah children brought to us by the organization IDF Widows and Orphans. On the Shabbat that they're with us to celebrate their Bnei Mitzvah, we have them all stand on the bimah as we recite the MiSheberach for the *chayalim*, remembering that these children have lost a parent to the scourge of war and terrorism in Israel. There's not a dry eye in the house.

Every year in December, my wife and I lead a mission to Israel, not to do the "touristy" stuff, but to deliver thick Canadian winter coats to gemachs around the country, to see the latest advancements in our "startup nation," and to give chizuk to soldiers and those living in the shetachim. We come back strengthened and revitalized and with even greater resolve to connect to the people and Land of Israel.

Challenges abound today for the Jewish youth of the Diaspora. Once they leave for university, so many of them are being taught to distance themselves from Zionism and Israel. Fortunately, our community and especially the youth of our community are bucking that trend.

As I've told my congregants many times, my job is to turn off the lights after you've all made Aliyah. I'm looking forward to saving on that electric bill.



The Thornhill, Ontario Jewish community has one of the highest Aliyah rates per capita in all the world. Our youth study in yeshivot and seminaries in Israel, and a high percentage of them serve in the IDF or do Sherut Leumi. Many of our families own second homes in Israel, and are spending more and more time there, as their financial and social conditions permit.



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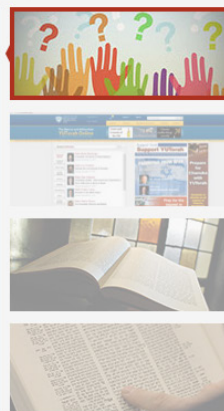
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with Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

*Senior Scholar, Center for the Jewish Future and
University Professor of Jewish History and
Jewish Thought, Yeshiva University*

8:30am Shacharit

9:15am Opening shiur

11:00am Kinot recital and discussion

5:00pm Mincha

Sponsored in appreciation of Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter & Yeshiva University and in commemoration of the 39th Yahrzeit for Helen Friedman Kuflik, Hodel Ruchama bat Avraham Shlomo v'Etta Malka, by Dr. Alan and Shuli Rockoff of Boston.



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