

L'Chaim



In the year 361 of the Common Era, 293 years after the destruction of the Second Holy Temple, a new leader of the Roman Empire ascended the throne. Julian would be Caesar for only two years, but his short reign would be distinguished by an unusually friendly relationship with the Jewish people. In fact, Julian was responsible for initiating an abortive attempt to rebuild the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. We are aware of these events thanks to a Greek historian who recorded them for posterity some 80 years after they occurred.

Julian was a nephew of Constantine the Great, who established Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. He also moved its capital from Rome to Byzantium (Turkey), and changed its name to Constantinople.

When Constantine died, his three sons fought over who would take his place. Almost all the members of the royal family were murdered, with the exception of Julian. After traveling to Athens and studying philosophy, he became disaffected with Christianity and reverted to the ancient idolatry of the Romans.

Julian went on to become a celebrated military leader, enjoying many victories over the warring Germanic tribes. When the then-reigning Emperor decided to exile him to the Far East, his troops rebelled and established him as the new Caesar. One year later, he declared full religious freedom for all citizens of the Empire. In truth, he was far more benevolent toward his Jewish subjects than to his Christian ones. In an official letter addressed to the "Jewish communities" of the realm, he wrote that he was henceforth exempting the Jews from the special tax that had been levied against them, and declared himself a long-time defender of the Jewish people.

In the same letter he blamed his uncle, the late Emperor Constantine, and his uncle's cohorts, whom he termed "barbarians," for the state-sponsored and institutionalized discrimination against the Jews. At the end of the letter he reassured everyone that he had personally had them killed, and advised the Jews to forget about them and relegate their nefarious deeds to history. Julian also promised that after the war with the Persians ended he would rebuild the holy city of Jerusalem, "which for so many years you have longed to see inhabited; indeed, I will help you inhabit it."

In general, however, the Jews were unimpressed by Julian's professions of fellowship. They knew that they were not sincere, and were actually motivated by selfish political ambitions. Nor did they consider him a new "Cyrus," who had been sent by Divine Providence to bring their exile to an end and rebuild the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

In fact, the Greek historian who chronicled this episode wrote that Julian's "friendship" with the Jews was largely the result of his hatred for the Christians. Moreover, he hoped that they would ultimately follow his example and assimilate into the dominant Roman culture.

At one point, Julian summoned the Jewish elders and asked them why they were not keeping the Torah's laws with regard to the sacrifices. The elders explained that after the Holy Temple was destroyed bringing sacrifices was forbidden, as doing so depends on having a standing Temple with priests to serve in it.

To demonstrate his serious intentions, Julian then ordered that the Jews be given a considerable stipend from the royal treasury, so they could begin to take the first steps toward reconstruction. According to the historian, the Jews actually started recruiting artisans and laborers. Their first task, however, was to clear the Temple area from the filth and debris that had accumulated over the centuries. Women, too, joined in the work, while others contributed their jewelry. After the ground was cleared they were ready to lay the foundation stone, but an extremely powerful earthquake intervened. Huge boulders flew in all directions, and the earth split in

many places. A number of Jewish workers were injured, houses came tumbling down, and many residents of the city lost their lives in the disaster.

When the dust settled, the laborers returned to their tasks. Some assumed they were still obligated to carry out the Emperor's orders, while other truly wished to continue. In any event, they refused to recognize the Divine Providence that was obviously against rebuilding the Temple at that time.

And then, as if to further indicate G-d's displeasure, a huge fire broke out at the construction site and many more workers were killed. At that point everyone agreed that the time had not yet arrived to build the Temple, and the project was halted.

Although there is no way to verify all the details in the Greek historian's account, it is undisputed that the Emperor Julian fell in battle against the Persians in 363, effectively putting an end to his plans.

The Rebbe has prophesized that the time for the Final Redemption has arrived. May we merit to see the Temple rebuilt immediately and at once.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

He shall not profane his words; everything that leaves his mouth he shall do (Num. 30:3)

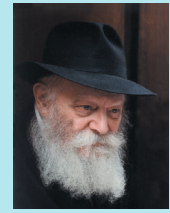
Whoever is careful never to profane his words, and is particular to fulfill his commitments has applied to him the verse, "Everything which leaves his mouth he shall do," i.e., "He"--G-d will fulfill the person's every blessing and utterance. As it says, "the righteous decree and the Alm-ghty fulfills. (Avodat Yisrael)

Aaron the Priest went up onto Mount Hor at the command of G-d and died there... in the fifth month on the first of the month. (Num. 33:38)

Our Sages said that "the death of the righteous is equal to the burning of G-d's house [the Holy Temple]." The fifth month is the month of Av, the month in which the Holy Temple was burned and destroyed. Another connection between Aaron's death and the burning of the Temple is as follows: The Second Temple, in particular, was destroyed because of causeless hatred. The remedy for causeless hatred is unwarranted love, which was exemplified by Aaron. Aaron "loved peace, pursued peace, loved all creatures and brought them closer to the Torah." (Likutei Sichot)

To execute the vengeance of G-d on Midian (Num. 31:3)

The name "Midian" comes from the root "madon," meaning quarrel and strife. Midian symbolizes contention and unwarranted hatred. The war against Midian is truly "the vengeance of G-d." For, there is nothing so opposed to G-d as dissention and needless hatred. (Sefer HaMaamarim)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week we read two Torah portions, Matot and Masei. Masei means "journeys." The journeys enumerated in this week's Torah portion from the time of leaving Egypt until reaching the valley of Jericho, signify all the stages that the Israelites must pass through until the coming of Moshiach.

Thus it is said in the works of the Kabbala, and in a teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, that he who understands the meaning of the journeys will know the particular "journey" of his present state as well as all that still lies before him, i.e., how many and which journeys he still needs to travel until the coming of Moshiach.

Generally speaking, all these journeys are in order of ascents. "These are the journeys of the children of Israel leaving the land of Egypt-Mitzrayim" refers to journeys in the plural from, notwithstanding the fact that there was but a single journey that took them out of Egypt; but every journey signifies a going out from the "mitzrayim" (which comes from the same root as restriction and limitation) of that moment and stage to the expanse relative to that moment and stage.

There are numerous levels and stages. Something may be a "good and expansive land" relative to a lower level, but it would still be "mitzrayim" relative to higher levels. The "journeys" thus teach us that one must incessantly move on and progress, regardless of past achievements. There must be a continual movement from Mitzrayim to a "good and expansive land," at the very least in terms of one's current status. This implies a non-gradual progression. With a single journey we can instantaneously leave Mitzrayim--restrictions and limitations--and come into a "good and expansive land."

Even so, one is not to content oneself with that singular departure from Mitzrayim. One must forever progress further in awareness of the fact that whatever stage has been attained remains a form of "mitzrayim," i.e. restrictive limitation, relative to higher levels. Thus, one must continue onward until reaching the "Valley of Jericho," the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our very own days.

From a talk of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, translated by Rabbi J. I. Schochet

The Power of Unconditional Love

As Tisha B'Av approaches (this year on Thursday, July 23), our thoughts naturally turn to the loss of the First and Second Holy Temples. While the day is marked by mourning, it also offers an opportunity to reflect on one of Judaism's most enduring lessons: the transformative power of love between fellow Jews.

Our Sages explain that the Holy Temple was destroyed because of sinat chinam—baseless hatred that divided one Jew from another. If senseless hatred brought destruction, then the path toward rebuilding must be paved with ahavat chinam, unconditional love freely offered to others.

This ideal is not always easy to achieve. Genuine love for every person often requires effort, patience, and a willingness to rise above our natural preferences. Even when it doesn't come instinctively, we are called upon to work toward it until it becomes part of who we are.

Rabbi Gamliel, the son of Rabbi Judah the Prince, taught that Torah study should be joined with productive work, explaining that the effort invested in both keeps a person focused and prevents spiritual decline. While this teaching is commonly understood to refer to earning a livelihood, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, quoting the Baal Shem Tov, offered a deeper interpretation. He explained that the "work" mentioned here can also refer to ahavat Yisrael—the ongoing effort to cultivate love and concern for fellow Jews. Torah flourishes most fully when

it is accompanied by sincere care for others.

This teaching had a profound impact on Rabbi Levi Yitzchak himself. Renowned throughout Jewish history for his boundless love of the Jewish people, he credited this insight with inspiring his lifelong devotion to helping and defending his fellow Jews.

Calling ahavat Yisrael "work" reminds us that meaningful relationships require commitment. We are challenged to extend kindness not only to those we naturally connect with, but also to those who may seem distant, different, or difficult. That effort is itself a sacred act.

Often, expressing that love is simpler than we imagine. A warm greeting, a genuine smile, or a few thoughtful words can brighten another person's day. Shammai taught that every individual should be welcomed with a cheerful countenance. Rabbi Yishmael, despite his distinguished position as High Priest, emphasized treating every person with warmth and respect. Rabbi Matya ben Charash likewise encouraged us to be the first to offer greetings to everyone we encounter.

Learning these teachings is only the beginning. Their true purpose is to inspire action. As we remember the destruction of the Holy Temple, may we also help lay the foundation for its rebuilding by choosing kindness, extending respect, and strengthening the bonds of love that unite the Jewish people.

לעילוי נשמת רחמים בן שרה
Dedicated in memory of
Raymond Braha, OBM
נפטר כ"ח תמוז, תש"ע
ת"נ צ"ב"ה
By Victor Braha



8:10 PM Candle Lighting Time
NY Metro Area
25 Tammuz // July 10
Torah Portion Matos/Masei
Blessing of the new month of Menachem Av
Ethics: Ch 1
Shabbat ends 9:17PM

SLICE OF LIFE

Making Jerusalem's Stones Speak



Rabbi Aharon Horowitz

Rabbi Aharon Horowitz is 70 years old and heads the Megalim Institute, the academic and educational arm of the City of David, where he also lives. Born in the United States and raised in a religious family, he studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, taught Talmud, and in his earlier years ran a tour guide training school. For more than two decades, he has been guiding visitors through the City of David, at the very heart of ancient Jerusalem.

"I was born in Florida and came to Jerusalem as a child with my family," he says. "My father was a rabbi who even established a Torah study institute, and he instilled in me a deep love for Torah and Jewish sources." As a boy walking through Jerusalem's alleyways, Horowitz felt the city's holiness, even if he could not yet articulate it. "Jerusalem is far more

than a place to live. It is a connection to the roots of the Jewish people."

He studied history at Hebrew University, driven by a desire to understand the Jewish people's past. Along the way, he helped establish the Golan Yeshiva and ran a tourism school. "Through everything I did," he says, "Jerusalem and the Bible were always inseparable from who I was."

In 2004, Horowitz joined the City of David project. "At the time, the site was neglected and lacked character," he recalls. "We began developing it as both a center of Jewish settlement and a major tourist destination." Today, the City of David draws close to a million visitors each year and has become Jerusalem's most visited site after the Western Wall. "This is the ancient core of the city, where Jerusalem began in the days of King David. Anyone who comes to Jerusalem must pass through here."

As head of the Megalim Institute, Horowitz oversees archaeological excavations and works to bring the findings to life through ancient Jewish sources. "Archaeology on its own can feel dry," he explains. "But when you connect the stones to the Bible and Jewish history, they begin to speak."

Discoveries are made regularly in the City of David. Seals bearing the name of King Hezekiah, or of ministers from the era of the prophet Jeremiah, link visitors directly to the biblical narrative. "One discovery that deeply moved me was cedar beams from Lebanon dating back to the time of King Solomon, remnants of the First Temple," he says. "Organic material that survived thousands of years. Suddenly, the Bible is no longer a book. It is reality, right in front of you."

Beyond excavations, the institute conducts seminars and conferences, but its primary focus is education. "We create materials for schools," Horowitz explains. "Students learn about King

David and King Hezekiah and develop a connection to their roots. Our videos are part of the national curriculum, even in the matriculation exams of secular high schools."

Each discovery strengthens the tangible bond to the Temple. "Every find sheds new light on the Bible and deepens faith," he says. "This place brings Scripture as close as possible. History becomes something you can touch."

Once, a non-religious tourist visited the site, and Horowitz asked him to place his finger on a specific point in an ancient wall. "I told him, 'Feel this. These stones belonged to your ancestors.' I saw how deeply moved he was." Years later, a rabbi approached Horowitz and told him, "You changed my life." When Horowitz looked puzzled, the man reminded him of that moment by the wall. "That encounter led me to Aish HaTorah," he said. "Today, I am a rabbi."

For Horowitz, the destruction of the Temple carries an urgent message for today. "The destruction was the result of spiritual, personal, and national failures," he explains. "It did not begin all at once. It started on the personal level." He often cites the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, where a single act of intervention could have prevented catastrophe. "That is the lesson for our time. Every individual matters. Every person can make a difference."

The City of David, he believes, teaches responsibility for the future by reconnecting us with the past. "The destruction of the temple reminds us to repair what was broken, to unite, and to reconnect with the holiness from which we come. May we merit to witness the rebuilding of the Temple speedily in our days."

Adapted from Sichat Shavua Magazine

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Having heard of you through mutual friends, to the effect that you are seeking the true path which each and every Jew and Jewess should follow in life, and though second-hand information is always difficult to evaluate, I trust the following lines may be helpful to you.

The importance of heredity in transmitting physical, mental, and spiritual characteristics is well known and obvious, even in the case of transmitting to several generations. How much more so where a trait is transmitted and intensified over the course of many generations uninterrupted, when such a trait becomes part and parcel of the very essence and being of the individual, his very nature.

It is also clear that when a person--as in the case of all living things--wishes to change an inborn trait which is deeply rooted in him, not to mention something that touches his essential nature, it would demand tremendous efforts and the outcome is bound to be destructive rather than constructive, creating a terrible upheaval in him, with most unfortunate results.

I have in mind particularly the Jewish man or woman, belonging to one of the oldest nations in the world with a recorded history of over thirty-five hundred years, who is naturally and innately bound up with the Jewish people with every fibre of his life and soul. Hence, such sects or groups which tried to depart from the true Jewish way of life of the Torah and mitzvot, could not survive, as history has amply demonstrated. Such dissident groups uprooted themselves from their natural soil, and far from being constructive, became the worst enemies of the Jewish people and their worst persecutors.

Only Jews who have faithfully adhered to the Torah and mitzvot, as they were revealed on Mount Sinai, have survived

all their persecutors, for only through the Torah and mitzvot can the Jewish people attach themselves to the Superior and Supreme Power, G-d, who has given us the Torah and our way of life.

Since the Torah and mitzvot and the Jewish way of life comes from G-d and His infinite wisdom, they are not subject to man's approval and selection. Human reason is necessarily limited and imperfect. Its deficiencies are obvious, since with time and study the human intellect improves and gains knowledge, and a person's opinions change. To confine G-d to human judgement would violate even common sense.

In our long history we have had the greatest human minds possible, who nevertheless realized their limitations when it came to the knowledge of G-d and His laws and precepts. We have had great thinkers and philosophers, who not only fully accepted the Torah and mitzvot, but have been our guiding lights to this day, while the dissident groups and individuals (who number very few) were cut off from our people and either disappeared completely, or, worse still, continued as painful thorns in the flesh of our people and humanity at large. One who is familiar with our history requires no illustrations or proofs of the aforesaid.

I trust you will reflect on the above and you will cherish the great and sacred knowledge which has been handed down to each and every one of us, in the midst of our people, generation after generation, from the revelation at Mount Sinai to the present day. Accepting this sacred tradition unconditionally and without questions does not mean that there is no room for any intellectual understanding which we can further provide, only that the approach must be right. For G-d in His infinite grace has given us insight into various aspects of His commandments, an insight which grows deeper with our practicing them in our daily life and making them our daily experience. In this way the Jews attained peace of mind and a harmonious and happy life, not only spiritually but also physically and came to the full appreciation of the happiness one attains being a son or daughter of this great and holy nation, our Jewish people.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In the future, the miracles of the Exodus will be secondary in comparison to those of Moshiach. Our Sages note that the

Exodus will not lose its place in our history but it will be secondary in significance to the Final Redemption, due to the profound, overwhelming miracles which will be performed in the Messianic Era.

(Highlights of Moshiach by Rabbi A. Stone)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'Chaim Publication.
From the Archives

There are two approaches to the present period of the three weeks between the Seventeenth of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av, the period which commemorates the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Holy Temple.

One approach is to dwell on the awesomeness of those tragedies and the difficulties suffered by our people in the exile which followed.

The other approach, while not minimizing the extent of our nation's loss, puts the emphasis on the purpose of the exile. Heaven forbid to say that destruction and exile are ends in and of themselves. Rather, within the ashes of the Temple's destruction was kindled the spark of the Future Redemption.

In an ultimate sense, this was the purpose of the exile -- to prepare the Jewish people and the world at large for the higher and deeper level of fulfillment to be reached in that era.

There is no question that the second approach is the one more followed in the present age.

Our Sages declared, "All the appointed times for Moshiach's coming have passed; the matter is only dependent on teshuva."

We have already turned to G-d with sincere teshuva. Thus, when speaking of the readiness of our generation, the Rebbe used the allegory of a garment that is complete in all respects -- "and all that is needed now is to polish the buttons."

Surely, the almost fifty years of vibrant Torah activity that have followed since that statement was made, have been sufficient to accomplish that purpose.

We are standing on the threshold of the Redemption. Moshiach's coming is no longer a dream of a distant future, but an imminent reality which will very shortly become fully manifest.

Through living with the concept of Moshiach, we will hasten his coming and bring about the era in which these three weeks of Bein HaMeitzarim will be transformed from mourning into the celebration of the Redemption.

May this take place in the immediate future.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.

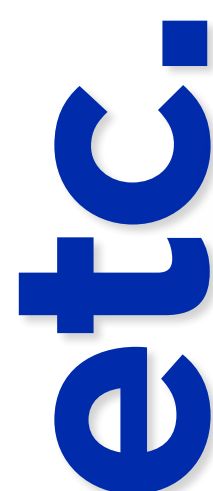


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Gala Dinner Celebrated 50th of Lyon Shluchim



More than 350 community members, supporters, public officials, and shluchim gathered at the Pasino Grand in Lyon on Monday, June 29 (14 Tammuz), to celebrate 50 years of shlichus by Rabbi Shmuel and Mrs. Sorah Gurewitz, who were sent by the Rebbe to Lyon in 1976.

Rabbi Shmuel Gurewitz shared a memory from a yechidus with the Rebbe: "The Rebbe told me something I have never forgotten: 'If I were in Lyon, I would make every effort so that one more child, and another child, would receive a kosher Jewish education.' ('Noch a kind un noch a kind...')"

Today, Chabad's presence includes 15 shluchim families, 8 Chabad Houses, and Beth Menachem, educating more than 750 children. The school is preparing an expansion with an early childhood center, a boys' high school, synagogues, youth facilities, and sports areas.

ETHICS: CHAPTER 1

Hillel and Shammai received from them. Hillel would say:

Be of the disciples of Aaron—a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace, one who loves the creatures and draws them close to Torah.