

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS


HONEST AND PURE

Some people are blessed with extraordinary charisma or persuasion, which they use to change the lives of others. But some have a profound effect even without that magnetism. Rabbi Avrohom Abba Freedman of Detroit was not a powerful speaker, yet he was *mekarev* hundreds of people, convincing parents to send their children to a Jewish school in Detroit's early years and bringing busloads of Russian immigrants on an inspirational trip to New York. What was the secret of his success?

The Orchos Tzaddikim states that a humble and unassuming person will wield powerful influence over others. People will naturally accept whatever he does, and he will inspire others. Ultimately, he will bring greater honor to Hashem.

Rabbi Freedman lived for the sake of Hashem. He was not motivated by pride. His son, the executive director of Bais Yehuda in Detroit, once posted an article on the school bulletin board describing Rabbi Freedman's role in the establishment of Detroit as a *makom Torah*. The article soon disappeared. Every time he put up a new copy, it was removed again.

Finally, the principal told the younger Rabbi Freedman, "You may as well give up. You may be stubborn, but your father is much more stubborn. He is the one who keeps taking down the article, and he even wants to call the editor to object to it as a distortion of the truth."

Because Rabbi Freedman had no ulterior motives at all, everyone could sense that his messages were pure, unadulterated truth. 

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OF THE WEEK

WHY WE MOURN

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

For the Shabbos preceding the anniversary of the Churban, the *haftarah* is taken from the first *perek* of Yeshayahu, which in broad strokes clarifies the calling of Yisrael, its place in mankind, the loftiness of its mission—and the depths to which it had sunk. We are shown its depravity, which made the destruction of the state and Temple necessary as the sole means of saving the nation itself.


The state is referred to as "Yerushalayim," and the Beis Hamikdash as "Tzion." Yerushalayim's destruction is Tzion's salvation; *tzedakah* and return to Tzion are Yisrael's cure. With these momentous thoughts, the *haftarah* comes to its end in verse 27.

The mourning of Tisha B'Av is thereby given sharply defined limits. The Jew does not mourn that thousands of years ago the Temple was destroyed, but mourns that it had to be destroyed. We mourn not for the destruction, but for its cause. Our minds are directed not so much to the past, but to the present. Have these causes disappeared?

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powerful
PRAYER 

VEHAYU HADEVARIM:
THE WORDS ON OUR HEART

If someone you love sends you a special letter, chances are, you will keep it and read it over and over again. The Torah is Hashem's letter to us. Following the mitzvah to love Hashem with all your heart, your life, and your possessions, comes a mitzvah to keep the words of the Torah in our hearts at all times. We do this by reviewing them over and over so, that they will always be *al levavecha*. The mitzvah of learning Torah is one of the ways to come to love Hashem. When we see its infinite wisdom, we realize the privilege of serving Him. 

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom

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THE DEPTH OF LOSS

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

Tisha b'Av, the saddest day of the year. We mourn the Beis Hamikdash, and all the sorrows that have befallen us over 2,000 years of bitter exile. Yet not everyone feels the intensity of sadness to the same degree. Many years ago, I heard the following *meshe* quoted from the Yiddish commentary on Tanach *Maaseh Ilfas*: Long ago in Europe, entire districts were the property of a nobleman, and all the towns in the area belonged to him. In one of those *shtetlach* lived an industrious Jewish working man who saved week after week and eventually managed to amass 500 rubles. This was an unusually large sum of money for a plain laborer, and he kept it safely in a desk drawer.

One day, in the town marketplace, he heard the *poritz* announce, "I am in desperate need of 500 rubles, cash, right away. I am willing to sign over the rights to the entire forest around this town, worth 10,000 rubles, to anyone who can bring me the cash immediately." The Jew was excited—this was the opportunity of a lifetime! He informed the nobleman that he could indeed supply the money and ran home to get it.

Meanwhile, back at home, the Jew's little boy was looking for something to play with. He opened a drawer and found colorful papers. With his little scissors he began cutting up the bills to shreds. When his mother saw what he had done, she grabbed the scissors and papers and started to cry. The boy cried too, because his mother had taken away his toy. When the father walked into the house, he saw everything—and he too began to cry.

Three people, crying over the same colored papers. The child cried over his game, the mother over 500 rubles, and the father over ten thousand.

So it is with us. Some people have little appreciation for the tremendous loss of the Beis Hamikdash and merely go through the motions of observing Tisha b'Av. Others wish that Mashiach would come and rebuild the Beis Hamikdash, putting an end to our *tzaros*. And greater people realize that the Beis Hamikdash was the dwelling place of the Shechinah.

Hashem wants to station His presence among us once again, as in days of old. He has been waiting for 2,000 years for His beloved people to finally return in *teshuvah*.

We ask ourselves whether obedience to Torah, and the noble humanity that we attain through it, have been realized. If the Temple existed today, would it be doomed to destruction again, to save the nation from complete estrangement and a permanent fall into erroneous ideas, demoralizing concepts, and pagan philosophy?

For it was demoralization, not morality; estrangement from, and not closeness to G-d, that were being brought about by offerings, praying, and festival gatherings. They were practiced not as a means for true *avodas Hashem*, but as substitutes for it.

Boundless selfishness, greed for profits, abuse of power for their own interests, as well as oppression of defenseless widows and orphans, luxury, and moral degeneration, together with complete lack of understanding of their wrongdoings—these were both cause and effect of the degeneration. These behaviors caused the *navi* to give the people the sad title of "lords of Sodom and the people of Amorah."

Therefore, each Tisha B'Av, the question is posed to every generation: Are we so deeply imbued with the Jewish spirit, with knowledge of Judaism, with knowledge of the deep contents of the Torah, that we could have a worthy environment in which to erect the Beis Hamikdash in our midst? Or is the gulf between Yisrael and its G-d wider than ever before?

Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



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MEMORY GAMES



How does the brain remember so much?

In Parshas Devarim, Moshe Rabbeinu reminds Bnei Yisrael of everything that happened in the desert. But how can people remember so much? And why do we sometimes forget? The brain stores memories using billions of tiny cells that send signals to one another. When you learn something new, your brain forms connections between those cells, like paths in a forest. The more you review or think about it, the stronger that path becomes. Sleep also helps! While you rest, your brain organizes and stores what you learned, so staying up all night before a test isn't always a good idea. Moshe's speech in Devarim isn't just a review—it's a reminder that remembering the past helps us make better choices for the future.

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