

THE EDA AND DAVID SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION

In Loving Memory of Itta bas Yosef Mordechai ז"ל and Tzvi Daniel ben David ז"ל Ainsworth
Dedicated by David & Eda Schottenstein

הקהל

Hakhel

The Woman's Unique Role in Hakhel

The mitzvah of *Hakhel* is to “Gather the people—the men, women and children,” including newborns. Bringing the young to such an event requires giving them attention, love and care, like only a mother can. A father cannot offer the motherly care that a child needs, no matter how knowledgeable he is.

Although the actual *Hakhel* gathering took place in the Holy Temple, *Hakhel* in the spiritual sense is applicable at all times. It happens every *Hakhel* year in every Jewish home—their miniature Holy Temple, by teaching the values of *Hakhel*: *They will thus learn to be in awe of G-d your L-rd, and “faithfully observe all the words of this Torah” (Devarim 31:12).*

Here too, the mother plays a most essential role. Because the woman is the “foundation” of her home, raising children, etc., she predominately assumes the responsibility of this mission of effecting the spiritual theme of *Hakhel* in their personal Holy Temple. Only then can her husband and children “faithfully observe all the words of this Torah.”

Adapted from a sicha said on 22nd Day of Elul, 5747 (1987)

סיפור חסידי

Once Upon a Chasid

By Yanki Tauber

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Bonaparte And The Chassid

Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your G-d... (Va'eschanan 6:4-5).

The Maggid of Mezeritch expounded on the verse “And you shall love the Lord your G-d”: how can there be a commandment to love? Love is a feeling of the heart: one who has the feeling—loves. What can a person do if, G-d forbid, love is not imbedded in his heart? How can the Torah instruct “you shall love” as if it were a matter of choice?

But the commandment actually lies in the previous verse, “Hear O Israel.” The Hebrew word *Sh'mah* (‘hear’) also means ‘understand.’ The Torah is commanding a person to study, comprehend, and reflect upon the oneness of G-d. Because of the nature of the human mind and heart, and the relationship between them, this will inevitably lead to a love of the Almighty since, in essence, the mind rules the heart. If one contemplates deeply and yet is still not excited with a love of G-d, this is only because he has not sufficiently refined and purified himself of the things which stifle his capacity to sense and relate to the Divine. Aside from this, such contemplation by the mind will always result in a feeling of love...

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch

In his Tanya, the bible of Chabad Chassidism, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi states: “By its very nature, the mind rules the heart.” This axiom, known as the ‘Aleph of Chassidus,’ forms the cornerstone of the Chabad-chassidic approach to life.

The renowned chassid Rabbi Moshe Meisel of Vilna, youngest of Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s disciples, once told Rabbi Eisel of Homel: “The Alef of chassidus saved me from a certain death.”

Rabbi Moshe Meisel, an extremely learned man, was fluent in German, Russian, Polish and French. During Napoleon’s war on Russia he served as a translator for the French High Command. Rabbi Schneur Zalman had charged him to associate with the French military officials, to attain a position in their service, and to convey all that he learned to the commanders of the Russian army. Within a short while Rabbi Moshe had succeeded in gaining the favor of the chief commanders of Napoleon’s army and was privy to their most secret plans.

It was he, Reb Moshe, who saved the Russian arms arsenal in Vilna from the fate which befell the arsenal in Schwintzian. He alerted the Russian commander in charge, and those who tried to blow up the arsenal were caught in the act.

“The High Command of the French army was meeting” related Reb Moshe “and hotly debating the maneu-

vers and the arrangement of the flanks for the upcoming battle. The maps were spread on the floor, and the generals were examining the roads and trails, unable to reach a decision. Time is short. Tomorrow, or, at the very latest, the day after, the battle on the environs of Vilna must begin.

“They were still debating when the door flew open with a crash. The guard stationed inside the door was greatly alarmed and drew his revolver. So great was the commotion, that everyone thought that the enemy had burst in in an attempt to capture General Shtaub...

“But it was Napoleon himself who appeared in the doorway. The Emperor’s face was dark with fury. He stormed into the room and raged: “Has the battle been planned? Have the orders to form the flanks been issued?”

“And who is this stranger?!” he continued, pointing to me. In a flash he was at my side. ‘You are a spy for Russia,’ he thundered, and placed his hand upon my chest to feel the pounding heart of a man exposed. At that moment, the Aleph of chassidus stood me by. My mind commanded my heart to beat not an increment faster. In an unwavering voice I said: “The commanders of His Highness the Emperor have taken me as their interpreter, as I am knowledgeable in the languages crucial to the carrying out of their duties...”

לקוטי שיחות

A Sicha

By: ProjectLikkuteiSichos.org

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Countering Sadness With Joy

The Holiday: The final mishnah of tractate Taanis enumerates five tragedies that occurred to the Jewish people on the 9th of Av. It then transitions to the 15th of Av, a day of great joy:

“There were no days as joyous for the Jewish people as the fifteenth of Av and as Yom Kippur” (Taanis 26b).

The talmud lists several reasons for this holiday:

- a) This was the day on which the members of different tribes were permitted to intermarry,
- b) the tribe of Benjamin was permitted to intermarry with the rest of the Jewish people after a period of ostracization,
- c) it was the day on which the deaths of the Jews in the wilderness ceased,
- d) it was the day that the slain of Beitar were brought to burial, several years after the battle at Beitar, and,
- e) The Gemara concludes with the following reason:

“Rabbah and Rav Yosef both say: the fifteenth of Av was the day on which they stopped chopping down trees for the arrangement of wood that burned on the altar, as it is taught... From the fifteenth of Av onward, the strength of the sun grows weaker, and from this date they would not cut additional wood for the arrangement, as they would not be properly dry, and they would therefore be unfit for use in the Temple. Rav Menashya said: And they called the fifteenth of Av the day of the breaking of the scythe” (Taanis 30b-31a).

The Questions:

- 1) The Talmud cites in the name of numerous Sages only this final reason, that the 15th of Av celebrates the cessation of cutting wood for the altar. The mishnah referred to this day as “There were no days as joyous for the Jewish people as the fifteenth of Av...” What exactly is so profoundly joyful about the end of the wood cutting season for it to warrant this classification?

2) The holiday was also given the name, “the day of the breaking of the scythe.” According to some commentators, this was literal. They actually broke the scythe on this day. What was the purpose of this ritual? Is it not needlessly destructive?

The Explanation: Because the mishnah positions the discussion of the 15th of Av directly after delineating the tragedies of the 9th of Av, it is clear that the theme of this holiday is meant to confront and oppose the negativity of the 9th of Av. All the reasons for the holiday correspond to some aspect of the 9th of Av:

The first tragedy of the 9th of Av was the decree that the generation of the desert would not be able to enter the Land of Israel. Opposing this is the joy of the 15th of Av, when the deaths of the Jews in the wilderness ceased. Beitar also fell on the 9th of Av, and opposing this is the relief on the 15th of Av several years later, when the slain of Beitar were brought to burial.

The full rebuttal of the decree against entering the Land of Israel is when the Jewish people fully settle in and take ownership of the Land. As long as the tribes were forbidden to intermarry, their ownership of the land was incomplete, for each tribe only could claim ownership of their portion. But once the members of different tribes were permitted to intermarry, then each member of each tribe could technically possess any parcel of the Land of Israel. Thus, this opening of intertribal marriage on the 15th of Av was the full consummation of Jewish ownership of the Land of Israel.

The primary tragedy of the 9th of Av, however, was the destruction of the two Temples in Jerusalem. The Second Temple, the sages taught, was destroyed because of needless hatred between Jews. To combat

this essential tragedy, we need a holiday whose theme is twofold: the building and upkeep of the Temple and its service, and the love and connection between all Jews.

This was the day of the breaking of the scythe. The ultimate purpose of the Temple was to have a place where sacrifices could be brought to G-d. Thus, the preparation of wood for the entire upcoming year of sacrifices is an essential task for the functioning and upkeep of the Temple.

But there is also an element of love and generosity here. For the wood was to be used for every Jew, for their individual sacrifices or communal sacrifices, without distinction. This undifferentiated generosity is therefore a response to the hatred that was the cause of the Temple’s destruction.

The literal breaking of the scythe was an even greater expression of the fortification of the Temple. Iron, the sages taught, was “created to shorten human life,” while the altar, which offers forgiveness, was “created to lengthen human life.” The iron of the scythe was only tolerated as long as it was preparing wood for the altar. Once the wood-cutting season was over on the 15th of Av, the iron could no longer serve a positive purpose and so it was broken. This symbolized the endurance of the life-giving Temple and its altar, as opposed to the harmful force of “iron.”

This also explains why the 15th of Av was celebrated, as the mishnah explains, with the maidens of Jerusalem dancing in circles and borrowing clothes from each other: the circle emphasizes the undifferentiated unity between the Jewish people, as does the cycle of borrowing clothing from across the economic divide.

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 24, p. 47ff.

גאולה
Geulah

Yalkut Moshiah uGeulah al HaTorah
Translated by Yaakov Paley

Moshe’s Prayer for Redemption

Moshe said, *va-eschanan el Hashem ba-eis ha-hi*, “I pleaded to G-d at that time.” He could have said simply, “I prayed, saying.” Rather, “I pleaded to G-d” means that the subject of his prayer was G-d Himself, i.e., the global acceptance of G-d. Similarly, the phrase, “At that time,” refers to the time of the future redemption, when all nations will unite in the service of G-d.

Moshe wished to bring this to reality by leading the Jewish people into the Holy Land. He had begun the process by taking the *eirav rav* from Egypt and converting them. But he was not destined to complete the process. Instead, he was told to ascend the heights where he was shown a vision of Moshiah, who will indeed bring the entire world under the wings of the *shechinah*.

Megaleh Amukos

Ignoring the Emissary, Running to the Palace

When the king sends an angry, terrifying soldier to summon you to his palace, it is easy to become intimidated. And when the king sends a friendly emissary, you may be tempted to joke around and enjoy the emissary’s company. Neither behavior is appropriate. A wise individual fears the king, not the soldier, and loves the king, not his emissary. For the king’s envoy is, in any event, inconsequential—his entire authority derives from the king’s seal upon his uniform. Instead of chatting with a mere envoy, let alone fearing or loving him, a wise individual considers the king’s will paramount and rushes to the palace, with no regard for the envoy.

Similarly, whether we encounter situations that terrify and harm us, G-d forbid, or happy situations that bring us great joy, we must view these occurrences as G-d’s emissaries, calling us to His palace and inspiring us to improve our divine service. We mustn’t be fools who delight in G-d’s envoys on their merits—eating, drinking, and chatting with life’s pleasures or dwelling on the pain of life’s tribulations—while forgetting that these situations were sent by the King to galvanize our study of Torah and performance of Mitzvot. Even momentarily engaging with life’s pleasures and tribulations before channeling them toward divine service is inexcusable. The King holds us accountable for any delay, and His delight turns to grief at our tardiness.

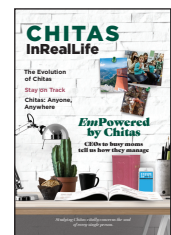
The wise are never distracted by the trappings of G-d’s messengers. “Why would I bother engaging with a mere emissary,” they wonder. “I shall go to the King now, and do His will.”

Par. 115

מורה שיעור לחת"ת ורמב"ם לשבת
Shabbos Chitas / Rambam Guide

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| Chumash – Rashi* | Va’eschanan, 7th Aliyah |
| Tehillim* | Chapters 60 – 65 |
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| Rambam – Sefer Hamitzvos* | Negative Mitzvah #181, #182, #184, #185 and #183 |
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