

# WHAT MAKES US TICK?

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BS"D  
13 Av 5777  
August 5, 2017

We read in this week's Parashah (4:9-10), "Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul, lest you forget the things that your eyes beheld and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life; [rather,] make them known to your children and your children's children--the day that you stood before Hashem, your Elokim, at Chorev [Har Sinai]." In many Siddurim, the above passage is listed among the "Sheish Zechirot" / "Six Remembrances"--events and ideas that some Halachic authorities require a person to remember every day. (See the standard Hebrew/English Artscroll Siddur p.176.)

R' David Bleicher z"l Hy"d (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Kiev, Ukraine and Miedzyrzec Podlaski, Poland; killed in the Holocaust in 1944) writes: The Zechirot are not incidental pieces of information to be remembered. They are the essence of what a Jew believes. He explains with a parable: Imagine a person about to take an urgent trip by airplane when an engine problem develops. No matter how big the rush, a wise person will stop to repair the engine. Only a fool would say, "I'm in a hurry now; fixing the engine can wait." Remembering the Giving of the Torah and the rest of these Remembrances is the engine that makes a Jew "run"; it is what causes a Jew to perform Mitzvot and study Torah, R' Bleicher writes. A defect in one's remembrance of these events is not an incidental problem, it is a critical issue.

What is the sign that one is "remembering" properly? Our verse answers: It is that he "make[s] them [i.e., these events] known to [his] children and [his] children's children." (Divrei Binah U'mussar p.154)

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## ***"You who cling to Hashem, your Elokim--you are all alive today." (4:4)***

R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (1749-1821) explains: Even while you are still alive, you cling to Hashem. How so? When a person performs a Mitzvah, a spiritual aura ("Ohr Makif") surrounds him. This aura or "light" assists him in completing the Mitzvah and is what the Gemara (Yoma 38b) refers to when it says, "If one comes to purify himself, he is given assistance." This is a cyclical process, for this aura spurs a person to perform additional Mitzvot, which, in turn, strengthens the light and leads to the performance of additional Mitzvot. As the aura becomes stronger, it also serves as a shield against

the Yetzer Ha'ra. This is why our Sages say (Avot ch.4), "A Mitzvah brings about another Mitzvah." (Nefesh Ha'chaim I, ch.6)

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***"Shema Yisrael - Hashem is our Elokim, Hashem is Echad / the One and Only. V'ahavta / you shall love Hashem . . ." (6:4-5)***

The Gemara (Pesachim 56a) relates: Before our Patriarch Yaakov passed on, he wanted to reveal to his children the "Keitz Ha'yamin" (literally, "the End of Days," usually understood as a reference to the time of the ultimate redemption). Suddenly, he sensed that the Shechinah had departed from him. He asked: "Perhaps someone among my children is unworthy, as Avraham had Yishmael and my father Yitzchak had Esav?" His sons answered, "Hear, Yisrael our father, Hashem is our Elokim, Hashem is Echad / the One and Only." Hearing this, Yaakov responded: "Baruch Shem / "Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity."

The Gemara continues: What should we do? Should we say it ("Baruch Shem")? But Moshe Rabbeinu did not say it (i.e., it is not part of Shema as found in the Torah)! Should we omit it? But, Yaakov did say it! Therefore, we recite it in an undertone. [Until here from the Gemara]

Midrash Rabbah adds that "Baruch Shem" is a praise that the angels recite. Therefore, on Yom Kippur, when we behave as angels do, we too recite this declaration aloud.

R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (Mashgiach Ruchani of the Ponovezh Yeshiva; died 1984) explains: Yaakov did not try to reveal the date when Mashiach would come. Rather, he tried to reveal how all of our suffering throughout the millennia will bring about the redemption and thus glorify Hashem's Name. Heaven did not permit him to do so, however, for knowing those details would negate our free will. It would not be a challenge for us to believe in G-d and to perform Mitzvot in difficult circumstances if we could see the "happy ending" to every situation. "Baruch Shem" is a declaration of Hashem's presence in our world. Yaakov could see that presence and so can the angels. For the time being, we cannot. (Derech L'Chaim Al Derech Hashem p.272)

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***"'Comfort, comfort My people,' says your Elokim. 'Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim and proclaim to her that her time [of exile] has been fulfilled, that her iniquity has been conciliated, for she has received from the hand of Hashem double for all her sins'." (Yeshayah 40:2--the opening verses of this week's Haftarah)***

Midrash Eichah Rabati (end of ch.1) states: The Jewish People sinned doubly, as is written (Eichah 1:8), "Yerushalayim sinned a sin." They were punished doubly, as is written (in our verse), "She has received from the hand of Hashem double for all her sins." And, they will be consoled doubly, as is written (also in our verse), "Comfort, comfort My people." [Until here from the Midrash]

Many commentaries wonder about the meaning--indeed, the fairness-- of this Midrash. R' Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht z"l (1924-1995; founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B' Yavneh, the first Yeshivat Hesder) explains:

The Gemara (Ketubot 66b) relates that, at the time of the destruction of the Second Bet Hamikdash, the sage Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai (RYB"Z) saw a woman who was so desperate for food that she was collecting kernels of grain from animal dung. "Are you not the daughter of Nakdimon ben Gurion?" RYB"Z asked, referring to one of the three richest men in Yerushalayim.

"Yes," she replied. "Do you remember that you signed my Ketubah, which was for 1,000,000 gold Dinars [120,000 times the value of a typical Ketubah of 200 silver Zuz]?" All her father's wealth had been lost, however.

Whereupon RYB"Z cried and exclaimed: "Ashreichem Yisrael / How fortunate you are, Jewish People! When you do Hashem's will, no nation can touch you. When you do not do Hashem's will, you fall lower than all the nations--indeed, lower than the animals of the other nations!" [Until here from the Gemara]

How could RYB"Z call the Jewish People fortunate under these circumstances? R' Goldvicht explains: The fact that the Jewish People are punished so harshly is a sign of our greatness. Just as a white garment shows dirt more readily than a dark garment does, so even minor sins leave stains on the Jewish People that would not even be noticeable on others. For this greatness, we are indeed fortunate!

This, writes R' Goldvicht, sheds light on the above Midrash as well. Of course, Hashem's judgment is fair. But, because He judges the Jewish People so strictly, it appears as if they are punished doubly. In reality, "one" punishment is for the sins that every person can perceive, while the "second" punishment is for the sins that are visible only against the white background of a pure soul. Thus, there are "two" sins, "two" punishments, and, someday, "two" consolations. (Asufot Ma'arachot: Eichah)

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## **A Torah Tour of the Holy Land**

*Who will build the third Bet Hamikdash?*

R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (Rambam; Spain and Egypt; 1135-1204) writes: "The king, Mashiach, is destined to restore the reign of house of David as in the days of old, to build the Bet Hamikdash, and to gather-in the dispersed of Yisrael." (Hilchot Melachim 11:1)

Rambam writes further: "Tractate Middot contains nothing more than a history. It describes the dimensions of the Bet Hamikdash and its form, its structure and all its details. The use of this information is that, when the Bet Hamikdash is rebuilt soon in our days, it will be necessary to adhere

to these details and make the building the same way, since they were set forth with Ruach Ha'kodesh / Divine inspiration." (Introduction to Mishnah [R' Kapach edition p.59])

The anonymous sage known only as "a Levi from Barcelona" (Spain; 13<sup>th</sup> century) writes: "This Mitzvah [building a Bet Hamikdash] applies when the majority of the Jewish People are on their Land. No individual is commanded to fulfill this Mitzvah, only the congregation as a whole. When the Bet Hamikdash is built soon in our days, it will be a fulfillment of this Mitzvah." (Sefer Ha'chinuch: Mitzvah 95)

Rashi z"l (France; 1040-1105) writes, explaining the Gemara's suggestion that the third Bet Hamikdash might be built on the first day of Pesach: "The Halachah ruling that the Bet Hamikdash cannot be built on Yom Tov refers only to a structure that is man-made. However, the future Mikdash that we are anticipating will be revealed fully built and will come from Heaven, as it is written (Shmot 15:17), 'The Sanctuary, my Master, that Your hands established'." (Commentary to Sukkah 41a)

"For You, Hashem, with fire consumed her and with fire You will in the future rebuild her." ("Nacheim" prayer recited in Minchah on Tisha B'Av)