



Partners In Torah
San Diego-Los Angeles
Study Guide

Tisha B'av
תשפ"ג

Authored by Rabbi Avi Cohen
Partners Detroit

7/25/2023

Partners In Torah

Mission Statement:

Hello, Welcome!

Partners In Torah is a community-wide, independent and inclusive adult education program focusing on understanding Jewish relevancy to our lives by studying text most interesting to each participant.

Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour each week, friendships are forged between mentors and mentees.

Partners in Torah has proven to be effective at reclaiming the rich legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and guidance for many who have, until now, lacked access.

Thank you for coming!

Please encourage friends to join you in participating so that we may grow together as a community.

This Thursday, July 27, the Jewish people will observe Tisha B'Av - the 9th of Av, a fast day. On this date many years ago, both Holy Temples were destroyed. Throughout history, other cataclysmic events also occurred on that day. The Jews were expelled from England, and from Spain, and this was also the day on which World War I started.

Although Tisha B'Av is a day of mourning and fasting because of the destruction of both Holy Temples, scripture surprisingly calls it a *מועד* - *moed*, a holiday! Our Sages teach us that Mashiach was born on Tisha B'Av. This means that the seeds of the future redemption are rooted in Tisha B'Av, and if we observe Tisha B'Av properly, we can bring the Mashiach.

On the verse (Exodus 38:21)

(כא) אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן מִשְׁפַּן הָעֵדוּת

21) *These are the reckonings of the **Mishkan** (Tabernacle) the **Mishkan** of Testimony...*

In his commentary to this verse, Rashi explains the repetition of the word Mishkan.

הַמִּשְׁכָּן מִשְׁכָּן - שְׁנֵי פַעֲמִים רִמַּז לְמַקְדָּשׁ שֶׁנִּתְמַשְׁכָּן בְּשָׁנֵי חוֹרְבָנִין עַל עוֹנוֹתֵיהֶן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל

The two times are a hint to the two Holy Temples that were destroyed because of the Jewish people's sins, and were taken as collateral.

The word *משכון* (Mishkan) Tabernacle has the same letters as *משכון* - *mashkon*, which means collateral. When a lender is not sure that the borrower will repay a loan, he may request collateral equal to the value of the loan in case the borrower defaults. Although the Holy Temples were destroyed, the verse is revealing that they were not taken away for good; they were merely taken as collateral until we repay the loan, meaning, we repent for our sins.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky adds an important insight to this comment.

When a wealthy person loses his wealth and must sell off some possessions to raise cash, he sells the luxury items because he no longer needs them. The necessities, however, which he will need in the future, he pawns until he has the money to redeem them. Because Hashem saw that the Jewish people felt that the Holy Temple was a necessity, He only took it as collateral. When we repent for our sins, we will get it back.

The Sages said it this way:

כל דור שלא נבנה בית המקדש בימיו כאילו נחרב בימיו

Any generation in which the Holy Temple was not rebuilt, it is as if they destroyed it.

By using the mourning and fasting of Tisha B'Av as a stepping stone to yearn for the Mashiach to come and build the Third Holy Temple, we transform Tisha B'Av into a constructive day of hope instead of a day of deep despair.

The Talmud in (Shabbat 31b) teaches us.

אמר רבא בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין אומרים לו צפית לישועה

Rava said, (after a person leaves this world) when they bring him in for his judgment, they ask him, "Did you yearn the final redemption?"

Rava is teaching us that we have an obligation to yearn and anticipate the Mashiach's arrival, and that when we are brought before the heavenly court for judgment, we will be asked if we fulfilled this obligation.

What, precisely, does this obligation entail? What are we anticipating will happen when Mashiach comes?

Maimonides writes (Laws of Kings 11:1):

המלך המשיח עתיד לעמוד ולהחזיר מלכות דוד ליושנה לממשלה הראשונה
ובונה המקדש ומקבץ נדחי ישראל וחוזרין כל המשפטים בימיו כשהיו מקודם
מקריבין קרבנות ועושין שמטין ויובלות ככל מצותה האמורה בתורה וכל מי שאינו
מאמין בו או מי שאינו מחכה לביאתו לא בשאר נביאים בלבד הוא כופר אלא בתורה
ובמשה רבינו שהרי התורה העידה עליו שנאמר ושב ה' אלהיך את שבותך ורחמך ושב
וקבצך וגו'

The King Mashiach is destined to arise and return King David's kingdom to its original glory. He will build the Holy Temple, gather in the Jewish people from the exile, and return all the laws to the way they were during his time. They will once again bring sacrifices, observe the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, as they were written in the Torah. Whoever doesn't believe in the coming of the Mashiach, or doesn't wait for his arrival, is not only denying the prophecies of the prophets, he is also denying the Torah given to us by Moshe, for it says explicitly in the Torah that Mashiach will come, as it says (Deuteronomy 30:3)

Maimonides spells out clearly what Mashiach will accomplish when he comes and for what we need to be yearning. Mashiach will build the Third Holy Temple and restore the Kingdom of David to its original glory.

King David was one of the greatest men who ever lived and was the Jewish nation's greatest king. He was a holy man, who dedicated every fiber of his being to Hashem. We are able to get a glimpse of who King David was from the passionate verses of the Psalms that he wrote with Divine inspiration. In the words and sentences of the Psalms, King David repeatedly expresses how his only goal in life is to serve Hashem by learning His Torah and performing His mitzvot.

As king of Israel, his charge was to transform his entire nation into Hashem's faithful servants. He succeeded, and as a result of his deep bond with Hashem, he made his entire kingdom an extension of Hashem's Kingdom. Under his holy rule, the Jewish people in the Land of Israel fulfilled their role - to reveal Hashem's presence to the world - by

mirroring Hashem's Kingdom. King David ran the country by the Torah's just and righteous laws. The entire civilized world recognized that Hashem is King of the world and that the Jewish people are his ambassadors to teach the world about Him.

This was Hashem's goal for creating the world. When all people in the world would recognize Hashem as King of the Universe, they would be worthy of the reward that Hashem created them to receive. This is what we aspire for, when we yearn for Mashiach.

Maimonides writes: (ibid 4)

(ד) ואם יעמוד מלך מבית דוד הוגה בתורה ועוסק במצוות כדוד אביו כפי תורה שבכתב ושבעל פה ויכוף כל ישראל לילך בה ולחזק בדקה וילחם מלחמות ה' הרי זה בחזקת שהוא משיח אם עשה והצליח ובנה מקדש במקומו וקבץ נדחי ישראל הרי זה משיח בודאי ויתקן את העולם כולו לעבוד את ה' ביחד שנאמר כי אז אהפוך אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרוא כולם בשם ה' ולעבדו שכם אחד

If a king will arise from the House of David, knowledgeable in Torah and engaged in mitzvot like his father David according to the Written and Oral Torahs, and he convinces the entire Jewish nation to scrupulously follow it, we can assume that he is the Mashiach. If he succeeds in building the Holy Temple on the Temple mount and gathers in the exiled Jewish people, then, we will know for sure that he is the Mashiach, and he will perfect the world such that they all serve Hashem as one...

Now that we know what is expected of us, we must ask ourselves how we plan to reach the point where we truly yearn for the restoration of Hashem's kingdom in the world. It would seem that to properly fulfill this obligation, we need to genuinely feel the void of Hashem's presence in the world.

Perhaps a glimpse of what life will be like when Mashiach comes can help. Maimonides provides us with that glimpse (ibid 12:5).

(ה) ובאותו הזמן לא יהיה שם לא רעב ולא מלחמה ולא קנאה ותחרות שהטובה תהיה מושפעת הרבה וכל המעדנים מצויין כעפר ולא יהיה עסק כל העולם אלא לדעת

את ה' בלבד ולפיכך יהיו ישראל חכמים גדולים ויודעים דברים הסתומים וישיגו דעת בוראם כפי כח האדם שנאמר כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה' כמים לים מכסים

At that time, there will be no famine, no wars, no jealousy or competition. Because the good will be abundant and all the delicacies will be as common as dirt. The whole world will be concerned only with knowing Hashem. Therefore, the Jewish people will be the greatest Sages who know the secrets of the world, knowing the Mind of their Creator according to their human abilities.

Coming from our current world, this is very exciting. No famine? No competition? Delicacies as abundant as dirt? This is what Hashem has in store for us. How do we bring it about? By yearning for it. It is solely up to us.

The Chofetz Chaim says that if we would sincerely yearn for Mashiach to come, Hashem would have to send him. He uses the following story as a source.

The Jewish community in Lithuania came to Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik with a request that he become their chief rabbi. Rabbi Soloveitchik refused at first, because after leaving his last position as Rabbi of Slutzk, he decided that he did not want to assume another rabbinic position. One of the delegates turned to him and said, "Rabbi, how can you refuse us? Thirty thousand Jews are waiting for you to come!" The rabbi was shaken by these simple words and immediately told his helper, "Quick, get me my hat and coat! Thirty thousand Jews are waiting for me, and I must not keep so many people waiting!"

The Chofetz Chaim said, "If Rabbi Yosef Dov couldn't allow thirty thousand people to wait for him, imagine if the Mashiach knew that the entire Jewish nation was waiting for *him*! He would surely grab his hat and coat and come immediately! The problem is that we are not really waiting for him."

In his book *Machaneh Yisrael*, chapter 28, the Chofetz Chaim addresses a few difficult questions.

How can we expect Mashiach to come when we are so downtrodden and vilified by the nations around us?

The Chofetz Chaim explains that the precedent has already been set.

Who would have expected Avraham and Sarah to have a child at the advanced age of 100 and 90 respectively? Physically they seemed too old and beyond hope. But that is exactly when they had their son Yitzchak.

Who would have expected Yaakov to father the twelve tribes and become fabulously wealthy after he was left penniless by Elifaz and after spending twenty-two years working day and night for the scoundrel Lavan?

Who would have expected Yosef to become the Viceroy of Egypt after languishing in prison for twelve years?

Who would have expected that a three-month-old baby put in the river would become the greatest leader of the Jewish people, lead them out of Egypt, and give them the Torah?

Who would have expected that the Jewish people, who were at the lowest possible spiritual level in Egypt, would be freed and chased out by Pharaoh himself?

This is the pattern of our history. Nothing is beyond Hashem, and through these miraculous turnabouts He teaches us that He is all capable and can do anything that He wants. With this in mind, we can, without any hesitation, yearn and request Mashiach even in our current situation.

What about that we have insufficient good deeds to bring the redemption?

The Midrash relates (Psikta DeRav Kahana 5:7) that this was the concern of the Jewish people in Egypt.

בשעה שבא ואמר לישר' בחדש הזה אתם נגאלין אמרו לו רבינו משה היאך אנו
נגאלין ואין בידינו מעשים טובים אמר להן הואיל והוא חפץ בגאולתכם אינו מביט
במעשיכם הרעים

When Moshe came to the Jewish people and told them that they would be leaving Egypt this month, they said to him, "Moshe, how can we be redeemed? We don't have any good deeds to our credit?" Moshe said to them, "Since Hashem wants to redeem you, He is not looking at your bad deeds."

Similarly, says the Chofetz Chaim, if Hashem decides it's time to redeem us, it will happen regardless of the number of good deeds that we have.

How can we expect Mashiach to come to us when he did not come to others in previous generations who were so much worthier than we?

This is not a question, says the Chofetz Chaim. Because, although it is true that we are so much smaller than those who preceded us, we know that Hashem combines the merits of the previous generations with ours, so it is as if we are midgets on the shoulders of giants, who can see farther than they can.

Therefore, says the Chofetz Chaim, we must all hope fervently for Mashiach to come because Hashem's salvation comes in the blink of an eye.

This is what Tisha B'Av is about. Not about dwelling on the past and what was, but rather focusing on the future and what we want to happen. We want Hashem to send the Mashiach who will build the Third Holy Temple and restore the Kingdom of David, Hashem's kingdom to the world. We want Hashem to be recognized by every single creature on the planet!

Maimonides lists believing and yearning for Mashiach as number 12 of the 13 principles of our faith.

יב - אָנִי מֵאַמֵּין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. בְּבִיאַת הַמָּשִׁיחַ. וְאֵף עַל פִּי שְׂיִתְמַהֲמֶהּ. עִם כָּל זֶה
אַחֲכָה לוֹ בְּכָל יוֹם שְׂיָבוֹא:

12. I believe with complete belief in the coming of the Mashiach. And even though he may tarry, nevertheless, I will wait for him with every coming day.

Some of the Rambam's contemporaries questioned his choice of believing in Mashiach and waiting for him to come as one of the principles of the Torah. Why does this qualify as one of the *principles* of Judaism? Can't a person serve Hashem and keep all the Torah's mitzvot *without* believing in Mashiach? How would missing that fact impact his perfect service to Hashem?

The answer is that even though we want Hashem's kingdom to be recognized in the world, it is not because Hashem needs it. Hashem needs no recognition from us, and all the praise and thanks that we give, give Him nothing. Instead, it is so that Hashem may fulfill His purpose in creating the world.

Hashem created this world so that He could give us pleasure in the World to Come. We earn this reward by making the right choices and creating a closeness to Him through learning His Torah and performing His mitzvot. Hashem does not want His kingdom restored so that He should be recognized and receive the attention due Him; rather, He wants us to recognize Him so He can give us reward for doing so! Hence, we want the world to recognize Hashem so that He can fulfill His purpose for creating the world and bestow reward upon us and them

Therefore, to think that the world can continue as is, with the glory of Hashem trampled and ignored, is to accept that Hashem's purpose for creating the world has failed. It is entertaining the idea that the world will never reach its perfection, and that Hashem's goal for creation will never be achieved. Of course, this is impossible. Hashem's plan *must* succeed. He holds all the cards and will see to it that it comes to fruition. This is a principle of Judaism. Hashem's plan will always succeed. Therefore, the coming of Mashiach is absolute. It cannot be any other way. There will come the day when all of humanity will recognize Hashem as the King of the universe. When this happens, Hashem will be able to fulfill His desire of rewarding his creations with the pleasure He created them to have.

Let us resolve on this Tisha B'Av to yearn for Mashiach to come, rebuild the Holy Temple, and restore Hashem's kingdom in the world. The yearning will go a long way to transforming that hope into a reality, may we merit to see it speedily in our days.