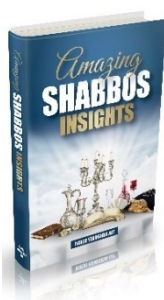


Fascinating INSIGHTS

ה' אב תשפ"ב
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[Music on Tisha B’Av](#)

As the 300,000 Jews were leaving Spain on Tisha B’Av 1492,¹ there was a psak issued by the gedolim, among

them the Abarbenel² which was a hora’as sha’ah for that specific time and place: They should be accompanied on their journey by orchestral music. And so they left Spain

¹ The Abarbenel writes that the Jews had not experienced a tragedy as severe as what happened in Spain where in that three-month period, primarily toward its end — between the 17th of Tamuz and Tisha B’Av — 300,000 Jews were forced to leave Spain. This does not even include the hundreds of thousands who accepted the alternative and converted to Christianity. This is besides the 200,000 Jews that converted to Christianity in 1391, 101 years earlier.

² Yeshaya (Yeshaya 66:20-21) promises that והביאו את כל אחיכם מכל הגוים... וגם, מהם אקח לכהנים ללוים אמר ה' they will bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to Hashem—with horses, chariots, covered wagons and mules—with joyous dances, to my Holy mountain,

Yerushalayim, says Hashem; just as the Jewish People bring the offering in a pure vessel to the House of Hashem. From them too, I will take men to be Kohanim and Levites, says Hashem. R' Yonasan Eibshutz (Ahavas Yonasan, Haftaras Balak) cites the Abarbenel: “This refers to the Jews of Spain and Portugal who were forced to convert. **Even though they assimilated with the non-Jews, Hashem will eventually take them as Kohanim and Leviyim and bring them under the wings of the shechina.** Even though these Jews have absolutely no awakening from below (as they have assimilated and intermingled with the non-Jews and have learned from their ways), still, Hashem will awaken them from above and place in their hearts the desire to love and fear Him.”

amidst music and song. On that Tisha B'Av, the musicians played which obviously is normally forbidden.

What was the reason for this ruling? The Rabbanim sought to boost the spirits of the exiled multitudes who were forced to abandon their homes. They wanted to encourage them, to infuse them with hope and Bitachon that Hashem was with them. Furthermore, they were employing music as a way of expressing gratitude to Hashem that they had withstood the test and didn't convert to Christianity. They merited to be *mekadeish shem shamayim*, to sanctify Hashem's name and that was a cause for celebration.

People with Predilection

The Chofetz Chaim³ is bothered how Moshiach can come in in such a time as ours when he didn't come in previous ones where the gedolim were greater.

1) He writes that we shouldn't wonder how we can merit that which even the earlier generations could not merit. The truth is that even though we are much smaller than our ancestors, Hashem adds up and combines our merits together with the merits of the generations that preceded us. This is likened to a dwarf who rides on the shoulders of a giant. The giant is very tall and can nearly reach the ceiling but he is a bit short as it is just beyond his reach. Then he puts a dwarf on his shoulder and the dwarf is able to reach the top of the building.

2) Here is another approach to this question. Although we recognize how impure and immoral the world is today, we cannot forget that this also showcases our greatness, as despite all the hardships and negative influences we still serve Hashem. The Ohr Lashamayim⁴ (1767–1831) quotes from the sefer Bris Menucha on the expression *im rishonim bnei malachim anu bnei anashim...*⁵ (“the scholars of previous generations were sons of angels, then we are sons of men; if they were sons of men, we are like donkeys...”). This standard applied in their day. However today, when there is so much darkness and yet we strengthen ourselves to serve Hashem according to our ability, **we are considered greater than tzadikim from earlier generations!**

³ In his sefer Machane Yisrael, chapter 25. This is a compendium of halachos he wrote for soldiers fighting in the Russian army.

⁴ Tetzave, s.v. *od nireh li*.

⁵ Shabbos 112b.

⁶ Chanuka, 56, s.v. *v'hesber*.

⁷ Mishnas R' Aharon, Volume 4, p. 190.

⁸ R' Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal explained the reason why he called his sefer Eim Habanim Semaicha. It was based on the Yerushalmi which refers to Eretz Yisrael as the mother of Israel and the lands of exile as the stepmother (Brachos 2:8). Chazal also state that our mother Tzion cries and laments over us when we are in exile and she waits for us to return to her bosom (See Pesikta Rabasi 27-32).

He then writes that in the year 1942 before Pesach, the cursed oppressors issued the treble decree to abduct young Jewish maidens in Slovakia age 16 and older and deport them to an uninhabited unknown land. “I know of an incident in which a certain person attempted to smuggle his young daughters over the border to save them from this horrible trap. It was Chol Hamoed Pesach and he promised his wife that he would send a telegraphed message from across the border informing her that he and his children had arrived safely. The mother sat at home anticipating and longing for the moment that she would receive the good news. It happened however that before they crossed the border, the father and his daughters were seized and transported to a nearby village where they were placed in prison. There, they remained for the duration of Pesach.

Similarly, the Arizal (1534–1572) once told R' Chaim Vital that nowadays, in the darkness of *galus*, even just one crying out or a groan that comes from the depth of one's heart, is like many fasts of earlier generations. The Yismach Yisrael⁶ points out that this was in the time of the Arizal. Imagine what a sigh or groan from us today is considered, as the *galus* and troubles of today are much worse.

Perhaps our lowly generation has the power to bring Moshiach as we face insurmountable challenges and are incessantly bombarded with tests and temptations of an extreme nature. By continuing to serve Hashem despite all the difficulties we face, we are indeed special. And we merit Moshiach more than any generation prior to us. In a way we are not dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants but we can be likened to the tallest of giants standing on the shoulders of the giants who preceded us.

America: The Final Stop

One morning in the yeshiva of R' Chaim Volozhiner, the boys were surprised by the onset of painful crying by R' Chaim in the middle of the Shacharis Shemoneh Esrei. The students asked R' Dovid Tevil, author of Nachalas Dovid, to ask R' Chaim what precipitated his tears. Reluctantly, R' Chaim explained to R' Dovid that the day will come when the pillars of European Jewry will topple, when the yeshivos will be destroyed. But there will be one more stop before the arrival of Moshiach — America. The tenth and final exile of the Torah will be America. Babylon, North Africa, Egypt, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and America. This is recorded by R' Aharon Kotler as an authentic mesorah: *החנה האחרונה תהיה אמריקה*.⁷

We live in historic times. We see the words of the neviim coming to fruition. All the neviim promise us that before the coming of Moshiach, Hashem will gather the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael from the corners of the globe.⁸ We have seen this in recent history with the arrival of Jews from various countries to Eretz Yisrael. The Iraqi Jews, the Yemenites and the Iranian Jews. This was followed by the Russian Jews and the Jews from Ethiopia. Many Jews from France have also moved to Israel among Jews from other countries.

We must realize that we don't belong in *galus* and have never belonged in *galus* — not in France, Poland or America. We belong with redemption in Eretz Yisrael, in Yerushalayim.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander זצ"ל for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg זצ"ל. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of four books including the recently released amazing Shabbos Insights, in addition to being the host of The Fascinating Insights Podcast. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 21:2] where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

They were in great danger of being sent off immediately to an unknown place as that was the punishment for someone attempting to escape. In the meantime, his wife was informed of the situation. Imagine the bitter emotions that overcame her. That Pesach she cried endlessly. R' Shmuel Dovid Unger, the Av Beis Din of Nitra selflessly and vigilantly endangered his own life and labored until he redeemed these three captives with a large sum of money. On the last day of Pesach, they were set free and permitted to return home, unharmed and in peace. His wife was immediately informed, via telephone, that her husband and daughters were set free and would return home the next day, Isru Chag, unharmed. From that moment on she waited expectantly for the father and daughters to return home. The next day she was unable to restrain herself and wait for them inside the house so she sat by the entrance of the courtyard. When they arrived, she burst into tears and overwhelmingly poured out all the emotions of her heart. Because of the profuse outpouring of emotions, she was unable to even utter words of thanks to Hashem for this great miracle.” (Later in the sefer [p. 525] the author reveals that this incident actually happened to him and his family). He then writes, “I imagine that such will be the joy of our mother, Eretz Yisrael, when we all return to her bosom after the horrible captivity we now experience. This is how I picture the wondrous joy that the mother will share with her children, that is, Eretz Yisrael with us and we with her. Hence, I titled this work Eim Habanim Semaicha, a joyous mother of children” (Eim Habanim Semaicha, second introduction).