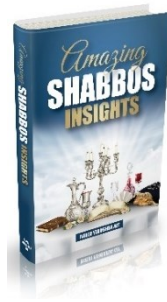


Fascinating INSIGHTS

ה' אלול תשפ"ב
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Car Accidents

In a letter dated Monday, Parshas Vayeishev in the year 1988, R' Shmuel Wosner¹ was asked for his opinion as to why there were an increase in car accidents during that period. One reason, he writes, is because of the sins that are committed on the road, as is known.² These cause spiritual evil forces to be created that are now present on the road and they snatch people in the guise of car

accidents. At times, even innocent people fall into their clutches.³

Another reason, he writes, is that people don't perform the chessed of giving a ride to those who are waiting for a hitch.⁴ Many times, this falls under the category of חסר וזה לא חסר⁵, this one benefits (hitchhiker in this case) and this one doesn't lose (the driver).

¹ Shevet Halevi 7:11.

² R' Sternbuch (Teshuvos V'hanhagos, 3:76) writes that included in חיות רעות (literally evil animals) that we say in Tefilas Ha'derech, are car drivers that drive like רעות רעות.

³ See Shemos 12:22, Rashi.

⁴ It has been said that giving a ride to people falls under the category of the great mitzva ארחים ארחים, hospitality to guests.

⁵ Baba Kamma 20a.

Nomadic Nation

During the Holocaust, R' Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal wrote that one who surveys the history of our exile notices that we never found a place of rest. Even if we dealt peacefully in a specific locale, it didn't last long, as they intensified their hatred against us to the extent that they stole our possession and expelled us from their land, impoverished and destitute. Throughout our exile we wandered from nation to nation and from disaster to disaster as is indeed happening today (during the Holocaust) with intense cruelty in all of Europe. It is simply indescribable as Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, "If we attempt to record all of the hardships, we will not succeed."⁶

This is nothing new (as the saying goes history repeats itself). Nevertheless, in days of old when we were forced to leave a particular place, we never considered establishing a gathering place and a new settlement in our Holy Land. Only recently in the past few decades, a movement arose to acquire fields and properties in Eretz Yisrael, to make them flourish and to build houses and orchards. Portions of land which for 2,000 years were desolate, disease-filled swamps are now suitable for living. From the time this movement began, Eretz Yisrael has become a fruitful and marketable land, despite all of the obstacles that the pioneers encountered. It has become an ornate hill towards which tens of thousands of people face,⁷ the most beautiful of sites, the joy of all the earth.⁸

Why did the Jews never consider doing this in the past? Our ancestors including many gedolim never contemplated acquiring and settling Eretz Yisrael even during expulsions. Now, after being in exile for so long, all of the Diaspora Jews are inspired by this idea and are infused with a breath of life, a newfound aspiration to rebuild the land by erecting houses, acquiring fields, working the land and planting gardens and trees. They want to make the land livable, to prepare and enable it to receive its children. It's true that over 300 years ago in 1563, the noble Don Yosef Hanasi, a member of the Sultan's court made efforts to rebuild Eretz Yisrael and transform it into a gathering and dwelling place for the Jews. With the Sultan's permission he sent workers and artisans and he even visited himself from time to time to supervise the workers. But he was unsuccessful. The neighboring Arabs became extremely envious, interfered with the work, and abolished this endeavor. Today (in 1942) efforts to rebuild the land grow daily, despite the Arabs' envy. No obstacle or deterrent can stop the workers from doing their task. Day by day the land expands and grows with new houses, trees, fields, vineyards and orchards. This is certainly not a simple matter and it is undoubtedly not a natural phenomenon.

R' Teichtal writes, "I discovered the answer in *Hon Ashir* by the kabbalist who is the author of the *Mishnas Chassidim*. He comments on the Mishna⁹ that says the Gailile will be destroyed of houses: When Hashem granted me the privilege to ascend to Eretz Yisrael, to Tzefas, I saw with my own eyes how this curse has become true. Due to our many sins it is filled with destroyed houses. In the two years that I remained there, however, I was happy to see that day by day it was being rebuilt. I claim that this is a sign of the imminent arrival of the Redeemer, for if he would come when Eretz Yisrael is in a state of ruin there would be no place for the ingathered exiles to dwell.

The same thing happened the first time we entered the land. Our rabbis state that Hashem detained the Jewish People in the desert for 40 years so that the land could regain its original strength. When the Jews left Mitzrayim, the Amorites destroyed and uprooted trees and buildings, thinking that Israel would enter the land immediately and find it destroyed. Hashem brought them in when the land was finally rejuvenated.¹⁰

The same will happen when Moshiach arrives.¹¹ This demonstrates that the land must be built up with houses and trees before the advent of Moshiach. If not, the Jewish Peoples' entry to Eretz Yisrael and the final redemption will be delayed. If the land is built up however it is a promising sign of the imminent redemption.¹²

Realize that the author of these words was one of the greatest, holiest, and most formidable kabbalists of the later generations. He experienced revelations of Eliyahu Hanavi and all of his words were said with Ruach Hakodesh. Who in our generation is noble enough to argue with him?

So we have an answer to our question: since we are living at the end of the exile, close to redemption, Hashem has inspired the Jewish People to dedicate themselves to rebuilding the land and making it livable. He is preparing the land so that the immigrants can gather there at the time of redemption. In any event, the rebuilding of the land is a promising sign of redemption and is the beginning of redemption according to the *Mishnas Chassidim*. Many of our Jewish brethren came to the Land and built cities, villages, gardens and orchards. They transformed great expanses of disease-infested swamps into dry land and fertile, prosperous fields. They sacrificed and endangered themselves to build the Land and make it fit for living. Is there even a shadow of a doubt that this is the wondrous work of Hashem¹³ and that it is a sign that our salvation is soon to come?! This is undoubtedly the beginning of redemption!¹⁴

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. 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, 7:12]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

⁶ Shabbos 13b.

⁷ Based on Brachos 30b.

⁸ Tehillim 48:3.

⁹ Sota 9:15.

¹⁰ Shemos Rabba 20:16, Rashi to Tehillim 40:6.

¹¹ *Hon Ashir*, end of Sota.

¹² The Midrash (Devarim Rabba 4:11) comments on כי ירחיב ה' אלהיך when Hashem will broaden your boundary (Devarim 12:20): R' Yitzchak said that

when a scroll is rolled up a person doesn't know how long it is or how wide it is but when it is unfurled and opened up it becomes known how large it is. Likewise Eretz Yisrael is primarily mountains and hills (See Devarim 11:11). When Hashem will straighten it out (i.e., flattened out) in the times of Moshiach (see Yeshaya 40:4), then it will become known what the true size of Eretz Yisrael is.

¹³ Based on Shemos 34:10.

¹⁴ Eim Habanim Semaicha, p. 180-3.