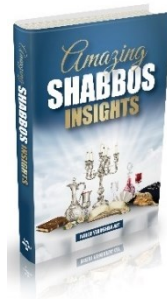


# Fascinating INSIGHTS

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### Alarm Clocks

One of the things that we may take for granted is our alarm clock. But this must be appreciated. In the 1700s your alarm clock was the rooster. If you went to sleep late, too bad! The rooster crowed at the exact same time! Today, however, we can choose from many types of alarm clocks that are so easy to use. And they can, of course, be set to perfectly fit your schedule!

There is a saying that you can often gauge a man's ambition by whether he hates his alarm clock or considers it his dear friend. Do we view the alarm clock as a best friend or worst enemy? Some look forward to waking up

in the morning so that they can have a magnificent day of accomplishment whereas others painfully awake for another day and try to just make it through.<sup>1</sup> A motivational speaker once remarked, "It is not an alarm clock. It is an opportunity clock."

It has been said in jest that the words<sup>2</sup> הקל קול יעקב refers to the alarm sounding (as it is to awake you to a day of accomplishment) but the next words והידים ידי עשו is a reference to pressing the snooze button once the alarm sounds, postponing you from rising.

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### Most Miraculous Miracle

<sup>1</sup> There is a joke that reads: "I need a new alarm clock. The one I have keeps going off while I'm asleep."

<sup>2</sup> Breishis 27:22. Simply, this phrase means "The voice is Yaakov's voice but the hands are Esav's hands."

If a person wants to see a miracle nowadays, all he has to do is look at a Jew. A Jew living today is the greatest miracle a person will ever see. As the Aruch Hashulchan<sup>3</sup> writes אין לך אות ומופת גדול מזה, there is no wonder greater than this.

More than 3300 years ago, our ancestors were in Mitzrayim where 80% of our nation perished. Yet Hashem preserved our ancestors so that you can be here today. At the time of the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash, the death toll was enormous but Hashem wanted you to be here today. Hashem made certain that we made it through the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash. The number of people that died during the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash was similarly staggering. Josephus writes that the number of people that died was 1.1 million. Then the Romans hunted down each Jew that they could find. But Hashem wanted you and so He saved your ancestors.<sup>4</sup>

Thousands of Jews were massacred during the crusades but Hashem wanted you. In the year 1391, 200,000 Jews were forcibly converted in Spain but Hashem invested in you. 300,000 Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and tens of thousands were killed. Hashem saved your ancestors from the Chmielnicki pogroms so that you can be here today.<sup>5</sup> We are a fraction of a fraction that has survived the selection of the Jewish people.

Hashem has been looking out for you for 3300 years. Your ancestor was rescued from the Holocaust so that you can be alive today. For a Jew to be here is not statistically unlikely or not highly improbable. It is IMPOSSIBLE! The greatest miracle!



Here are the astounding words of R' Yaakov Emden.<sup>6</sup> “How can the heretic in G-d’s providence not be ashamed? Simply analyze our situation in this world. We are an exiled people, and despite all that has happened to us over thousands of years we are still here. I swear that when I marvel at this wonder, it is much greater to me than all the miracles that Hashem performed for our ancestors in Mitzrayim, the midbar and in Eretz Yisrael.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Orach Chaim 1:10. See also Devarim 28:37, Rashi.  
<sup>4</sup> There have been many nations and countries at the top at some point in history, yet have crumbled to its destruction. Such nations include Greece, Russia and Nazi Germany. This is what is meant in קול ה' שבר ארזים, the voice of Hashem breaks the cedars (Tehillim 29:5).  
<sup>5</sup> It seems like many times throughout history, the pasuk (Amos 5:19) באשר ינוס איש מפני הארי ופגעו הדב, when a man flees from before a lion and encounters a bear, was unfortunately fulfilled, as they met one brutal regime after the next.  
<sup>6</sup> Introduction to his Siddur Beis Yaakov. This was written close to 300 years ago. What would he say today?  
<sup>7</sup> Eicha 1:15.  
<sup>8</sup> Sefer Magid Ha'rakia, p. 232, Tisha B'Av. Another explanation as to why Tisha B'Av is called a Moed (Eicha 1:15) although it is such a sad day is the following. With growth and creation, the first step is the withering, the rotting of what is already present. Only then can growth take place.

So the greatest miracle in the history of the world Hashem performed for you. And this is because He wants you, your tefillos, your Torah and mitzvos. **Throughout the history of the universe, there is nothing that Hashem has invested Himself in more than in the existence of each Jew!**

In light of what we have said, we can explain why Tisha B'Av is called a moed.<sup>7</sup> Just like Pesach commemorates the miracles of the exodus from Mitzrayim and Sucos commemorates the miracle of the Ananei Hakavod, Tisha B'Av commemorates the greatest miracle of all — the miracle of Jewish survival and eternity.<sup>8</sup>

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### Tenuous But Tremendous

In Shemoneh Esrei<sup>9</sup> we say כי אתה שומע תפלת כל פה פה, You hear the prayer of every mouth. R' Uri of Strelisk is bothered why the formula is כל פה פה and not תפלה כל, that Hashem listens to every tefilla?

The words כל פה פה refer to a tefilla articulated without heart, by rote. It was just uttered with the mouth. Even such a tefilla Hashem listens to.<sup>10</sup>

The Magid of Trisk in his Sefer Magen Avraham writes in the name of the Baal Shem Tov: Even if one doesn't know any kavanah and what the words of davening mean but just davens to Hashem because he is commanded, עד לרקיע, תפלתו בוקעת ועולה — his tefilla still ascends and breaks through to the sky. This is because these holy words have such kedusha when it is said l'shem shamayim.



The pasuk says יפתוהו בפיהם ובלשונם יזכו לו ולבם לא יבכו עמו.<sup>11</sup> The Yesod Ha'emuna explains in the name of the Arizal that tefilla works in the higher spheres even without kavanah, as Hashem is persuaded (יפתוהו) from our tefilla even it is just with our mouth (בפיהם), without our heart (ולבם לא יבכו עמו).<sup>12</sup>

Rabbi Alt mentored 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 Chablos 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.

Consider a grain seed that has been planted where only once the existing seed has rotted the new plant can begin to take shape. With this R' Pinchas Koritzer (Imrei Pinchas, Tisha B'Av, 388) explains why Tisha Ba'v is called a Moed. He explains that to create there must first be destruction. The same applies to the Churban where the great light of Moshiach (see Tanchuma, Naso 11) is preceded by the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. The destruction of the Beis Hamikdash which actually transpired on that day is thus actually a crucial part of the redemption. The ultimate goal for this special day however is one of Moed and celebration as it has been destined to be the day upon which Hashem reveals His special light. It is inherently a day in which celebration is in order.  
<sup>9</sup> In the Bracha of Shema Kolainu (Nusach Sefard).  
<sup>10</sup> Mayana Shel Torah, Vaeschanan, 3:23.  
<sup>11</sup> Tehillim 78:36-7.  
<sup>12</sup> Taamai Haminhagim, p. 38.