

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

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"...fear not to go down to Egypt.. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again." (Vayigash 46:3-4) Jacob was not sent to the galut on his own: the Almighty descended with him and guarded him there.

Our patriarch Jacob possessed an all-comprehensive soul which compounded the souls of all Jews. "Jacob" thus stands for every single Jew, and his descent to Egypt alludes to Israel's descent into galut, including the present galut. Our sages thus said that "all the kingdoms of the world are referred as Mitzrayim (Egypt), because they metzirot [distress] Israel."

From our parshah it follows then that even in our present galut we are not alone. The Almighty is with us, as it is said, "Wherever they were exiled, the Shechinah [Divine Presence] is with them." (Megilah 29a). Moreover, "In all their affliction, He is afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9): He Himself suffers their affliction, as it were. Thus just as Israel is unable to bear the affliction of the galut, so, too, as it were, with the Almighty. No doubt, then, but that He shall hasten the redemption, for as we leave the galut, so will He, as stated in our text, "I will also bring you up again."

When Jacob met Pharaoh in Egypt, the king asked: "How many are the days of your life? And Jacob said to Pharaoh: 'The days of the years of my wanderings are one hundred and thirty years; the days of the years of my life were few and bad..' " (Vayigash 47:8-9) How could Jacob say of "one hundred and thirty years" that they are but few when the average life span after the generation of the flood was one hundred and twenty years?

Jacob was the third of the patriarchs and thus most intimately bound up with the third and eternal Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple) to be built by Moshiach. All his life he yearned for the everlasting peace and tranquillity of the Messianic era. For as long, then, that the Messianic redemption did not happen, he regarded the years of his life as qualitatively few. His years were few and meager because they did not contain that which is most important of all, namely the ultimate and complete redemption. www.moshiach.com

Your servant our father (44:24, et al) Ten times Joseph heard his brothers refer to his father as "your servant" and he did not protest. Because of this, his life was shortened by ten years. (Joseph lived 110 years.) (Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 39)

And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Be'er-Sheba (46:1) Why did he go there? Said Rabbi Nachman: He went to cut down the cedars which his grandfather Abraham had planted in Be'er-Sheba. These cedars were then taken along when the Children of Israel left Egypt, and were used for the construction of the Sanctuary in the desert. (Midrash Rabbah)

For all the years that the children of Israel were in Egypt, Jacob's cedars served as a link to their past and a promise of their future. "This is not your home," the growing trees said. "You, like us, hail from a loftier, holier place. And soon you will leave this depraved land, to be reclaimed by G-d as His people. You will then uproot us from this foreign land and carry us triumphantly to Sinai, where you will construct out of us a dwelling for the Divine presence in your midst." (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father... and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck (46:29) But Jacob did not embrace Joseph and did not kiss him; our sages tell us that he was reading the Shema. (Rashi) Why did Jacob choose that particular moment to read the Shema? Because Jacob knew that never in his life would his love be aroused as it was at that moment, the moment of reunion with his most beloved son after twenty-two years of anguish and loss. So he chose to utilize this tremendous welling of emotion to serve His Creator, channeling it to fuel his love for G-d. (The Chassidic Masters) chabadonline.com

Jerusalem Under Siege

On Friday, January 5th, Jews all over the world will fast, mourn and pray, remembering that on this day--Tevet 10 on the Jewish calendar--began the siege on Jerusalem by the armies of the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar, which led to the conquest of the city, the destruction of the Holy Temple, and the expulsion of the people of Israel from their land.

Today, 2,425 years later, Jerusalem is once again under siege. Oh, you can get into your car and drive west to Tel Aviv (though venturing north, east or south is quite a different matter), and the supermarkets are stocked with Corn Flakes and low-fat yogurt. But it is a siege as terrible and as deadly as any the city has known.

As I sit writing these words a stone's throw from downtown Jerusalem, I can hear the shooting at the apartment houses of Gilo, two neighborhoods over, from the abutting Arab village of Beit Jalla. In and around the city and throughout the country, the enemy hurls rocks, bullets and bombs at Jewish soldiers and schoolbuses. While the six Dovidovitch children contemplate the loss of their mother and 8-year-old Tehillah Cohen contemplates the loss of her two legs, diplomats scurry about pushing "position papers" and TV commentators and newspaper columnists revile the Jews for refusing to lay down their weapons and board the cattle cars like good little boys and girls.

The killers are driven by hate, the pundits and politicians by vanity and naiveté; together, they would rip the heart of Israel from its body.

But even more frightening is the way history is repeating itself. The Talmud describes how, instead of uniting against the common enemy, Jewish factions battled each other in besieged Jerusalem. "Because of baseless hatred between Jews," concludes the Talmud, "was Jerusalem destroyed."

Why, asks the Lubavitcher Rebbe, does the Talmud insist that the hate was "baseless"? Were there not reasons, both ideological and pragmatic, for the divisions amongst the Jews? But no reason, explains the Rebbe, is reason enough for hate. The commonality of our fate runs so much deeper than any possible cause for animosity. All hate, then, is baseless hatred.

So if "baseless hatred" was the cause of the destruction, continues the Rebbe, its remedy is "baseless love"--our rediscovery of the intrinsic unity which overrides all reasons for discord and strife.

Pray for Jerusalem, encourage and aid its defenders, and show love to a fellow Jew--no matter how he or she differs from you. For if there is one redeeming virtue in being under siege, it is the opportunity to realize that we're all in this together.

By Yanki Tauber- chabadonline.com

MAN'S LIFE IS DEPENDENT ON THE AIR AROUND HIM. WITHOUT AIR HE CANNOT LIVE AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE IS DEPENDENT ON THE QUALITY OF AIR. IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF TORAH AND MITZVOT THERE IS HEALTHY LIFE. IN A G-DLESS ENVIRONMENT LIFE IS DISEASED, AND ONE IS CONSTANTLY THREATENED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING STRICKEN WITH CONTAGIOUS MALADIES. THE FIRST GENERAL STEP IN HEALING IS TO PURIFY THE ATMOSPHERE. PURIFICATION OF THE AIR IS THE TASK OF EVERY PERSON FAMILIAR WITH TORAH AND TORAH-LITERATURE, AND IS EFFECTED THROUGH THE LETTERS (1) OF TORAH. WHEN RECITING WORDS OF TORAH WHILE IN THE STORE OR WALKING IN THE STREET OR RIDING THE SUBWAY, ONE CLEANS THE AIR. EVERYONE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN TORAH MUST HAVE SOME TORAH MEMORIZED - CHUMASH, TEHILLIM, MISHNA, TANYA, ETC., SO THAT AT ALL TIMES AND IN ALL PLACES HE WILL BE ABLE TO THINK AND UTTER THE HOLY LETTERS OF TORAH. (2) . (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM TEVET 11).

Many people, without realizing, end up with two G-d's; One G-d is an impersonal one, an all encompassing, transcendent force. But then, at times of trouble, they cry out to another, personal G-d, with whom they have an intimate relationship. Our faith is all about knowing that these two are one.

-Bringing Heaven Down To Earth