

Perceptions



This week's Perceptions is dedication *illuy Nishmas* my mother and teacher, **Leah bat Tzvi, a"b**, on her 40th *yahrzeit*. Her home was always open to those who needed her.

Parashas Devarim • Menachem Av 9, 5782 • August 6, 2022 • Issue #1058

They ask how it was possible for the First Temple to be destroyed. They don't mean physically, although stone burning would seem to have been a miracle. They mean how was it possible that the Jewish people could get to such a level of spiritual debt to make God take His Temple back and exile His people? *Eichab?*

The answer is a familiar one, just on a very large scale. Why do people smoke if they know it is dangerous? Because they don't think cancer will happen to them. Why do people drive recklessly on the road? Because they don't think they will get into an accident, even if they end up causing others to get into one. Statistically...

Statistics of course do not mean as much as people think once you factor in *hashgochab pratis*—divine providence. The odds can be 100,000,000:1 that you will fail or get hurt. But if God is the "one," well then, the odds might as well be the other around. Aint no statistic that can save a person if God is gunning for them, and being reckless may convince Him to to exactly that.

But it wasn't a statistic that the Jewish people relied upon to sin and risk losing the Temple. It was actually *hashgochab pratis* itself, and it had to

do with the *Korban Tamid*, the Continual Offering brought twice a day during Temple times. It was brought in the morning to atone for sins done the previous night, and at sunset, to atone for the sins since the morning *Tamid*.

It was 24-hour coverage, seven days a week. Whatever sins built up during the night, they were gone the next morning, each day. Whatever sins built up during the day were gone by sunset, each day. Hence the question: How were sins able to accumulate over the generations of Jews to the point of the total destruction of the House of God?

They forgot to read the fine print. It's like the *Gemora* says, if someone says, "I will sin and atone for it on *Yom Kippur*," *Yom Kippur* will not atone for them. Even if a person sins with intention to sin, and then later on decides to do *teshuva* on *Yom Kippur* for the sin, *Yom Kippur* will atone for them. But if a person uses *Yom Kippur* as the *reason* for their sin, meaning that they sin depending on its promise of atonement, then it won't work. God did not give us the opportunity to atone in order to create an opportunity to sin. That's just plain, well, not very smart thinking.

Likewise, that's what led to the destruction of the Temple. The Jewish people sinned thinking

that whatever transgressions they committed at night would be erased by the morning *Korban Tamid*. They relied on the afternoon *Tamid* to erase any sins they might have done that day. So they just kept sinning and accumulating a debt to God until, SURPRISE!, God came collecting and *Tisha B'Av* became a reality for all the generations to come after that.

NEW BOOKS:

More About Me: The Ongoing Lifelong Search For Your Essential Self.

Tell Me More: A book about thinking and asking questions.

All books are available through Amazon and the thirtysix.org online store.

Shabbos Day

PERHAPS THIS CAN also explain what happened with the spies in Moshe's time, which the *Gemora* says was the original cause of *Tisha B'Av*. A similar question can be asked: How could the generation of the spies have possibly expected a positive outcome after rejecting *Eretz Yisroel* and choosing to remain in the desert? Mutiny against the captain of the ship might work with enough dissenting opinions. Mutiny against God equals death. Unless they were suicidal, they had to have relied upon something to protect them from divine retribution!

They had. They were very careful to make it seem as if their reason for not making *aliyah* was because they were unprepared for war against the 31 kings of Canaan. They knew that God acts as physically strong as the nation is spiritually strong. After assessing their spiritual level, they concluded that they would force God to act weaker than the armies of Canaan. This would result in a military loss and...this is the punchline...a terrible *Chillul Hashem*, profanation of God's name. That was the last thing they wanted to be responsible for!

In general, they would have been right:

It also says in many places in the holy *Zohar* that "the sins of men cause imperfections

above." It says the opposite as well. This is the meaning of the verse, "Give strength to God!" (*Tehillim* 68:35)...When the Jewish people act improperly, they weaken the strength of God. When they act correctly, they give strength and power to God. (*Nefesh HaChaim, Sha'ar* 1, Ch. 3)

If in general they would have been right, why were they wrong here specifically? For the same reason that they left Egypt, though they lacked the merit to do so. *It had to happen*. History required it. God wanted it, and was prepared to make it work regardless of the facts on the ground. It was about fulfilling a promise to Avraham *Avinu*, and God and Avraham never discussed a change of plan if the Jewish people would not been worthy of it.

The *bris* included settling in *Eretz Yisroel*. It was a package deal, leaving Egypt and going to *Eretz Yisroel*. Before leaving Egypt there might have been some room for doubt, since the plagues had yet to do their thing. Four-fifths of the nation apparently gave up and chose to remain in Egypt and *did*, but not the way they planned. They died during the Plague of Darkness.

Once they left Egypt however there was no more room to second guess redemption. It had already happened. They were in the middle of it. Even if it took 39 more years than it should have, thanks to the spies, they still had to end up in *Eretz Yisroel*. After all, as God Himself told them:

I am God your God Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be God to you. (Vayikra 25:38)

You probably read that verse very quickly and did not give it time to settle into your mind. Allow me to explain it: I am God, Who made the world and Who runs every last aspect of it. I am infinite, omniscient, and omnipresent. Everything that exists and happens is completely a function of My will and nothing else. *Ain Od Milbadai*...there is none other than *Me*.

And I am *your* God.

"Wait, then who is the god of the rest of the world?" you might ask.

“Me too, obviously.”

“Then what do You mean, ‘your God?’”

“I mean,” God says to the Jewish people, “that I am prepared to listen to what you have to say regarding the running of Creation. I am prepared to let you impact My decisions about what I plan to do, and make you a partner in history. This of course means that I will need to give you what you need to make it happen.”

Seudas Shlishis

“AND I WILL give you *Canaan*,” God told us, “which you will transform into *Eretz Yisroel* when you inhabit it and serve Me on it. You will build a Temple there, and I will allow My Presence to occupy it. You will become a *ben bayis*, like one of My personal household. This will allow you to not only *know* My Presence, but *feel* it. It will be palpable and inspiring and rewarding. It will be otherworldly. And all *you* have to do is say you’re interested.”

Sounds great, no? Then what went wrong? Or rather, what *goes* wrong? Because, as mentioned before, the *Gemora* says that any generation in which the Temple is not rebuilt it is as if it was destroyed in that generation. Since we have yet to rebuild the Temple we are considered destroyers of it. It should really be *Tisba B’Av* all year round (I almost fell off my chair just writing that. *Kinos* everyday?!).

The simple answer is the *yetzer bara*. Our evil inclination is all over us and gets us to act naughty. It makes mountains out of molehills and molehills out of mountains, mixing up our priorities so that we focus our energy and time on the wrong things. The *yetzer bara* is out to kill us (*Kiddushin* 30b), and it doesn’t mind doing it spiritually if it can’t actually do it physically.

If only it were that simple. It is the *yetzer bara* that is responsible, but not necessarily in the way many people think. That’s how it gets away with what it does for so long, so that sins can build up and eventually cause the most catastrophic damage man can comprehend.

The most amazing equation I have ever come across in my entire life is what I call the “Equation of Life.” It is amazingly simple ($25 + 11 = 36$, $25 - 11 = 14$), and yet it sums up the *entire* purpose of

Creation and life. All of Torah, from *Pshat* to *Sod* is encoded in it. It is so fundamental to everything, that I wrote a book about it with the same name.

The second most remarkable equation I have ever seen for similar reasons is $1,358 - 1,118 = 240$. It too is an equation of life, in a sense, just another way of expressing the first equation.

It means very little until you realize that 1,358 is the *gematria* of the second verse of the *Shema*, and 1,118 is the *gematria* of the *Shema* itself. So, if you subtract the *gematria* of the *Shema* from the *gematria* of *Boruch Shem*, etc., the result is 240, the *gematria* of *suffek*, which means doubt, and, of course, *Amalek*. You know, Amalek, the nemesis of the Jewish people and enemy of God?

In short, Amalek creates doubt in our minds to transform the clarity of the *Shema*, the level of the angels, into the unclear reality of *Boruch Shem*, our level of reality for now. That’s why we say *Boruch Shem* quietly to ourselves. We can’t see the reality of God as clearly as the angels do. We can only have faith that it is what we’re told it is, always present and always in control. And as we all know, faith is always a work in progress, and something that requires constant maintenance. And that brings us to the next installment of *Ain Od Milvado*.

***Ain Od Milvado*, Part 11**

THANK YOU TO those who responded and encouraged me to continue with *Ain Od Milvado*. This story is from someone I know, and their struggle and success with fulfilling the idea of *Ain Od Milvado*.

We have yet to buy even a small car because we have been able to rent cars locally from a company called CityCar. The rates are decent and it is quite convenient to use, *b”H*. I only have to reserve a car online, walk over a block, put in the code, and drive away. Who needs to own a car? The only problem is when damage occurs to the car, as it did one Friday for me. If it was my car I could just do what most Israelis do: live with the damage until you choose to fix it, which for some is never. Someone else’s car means paying now. For the most part, I have had a good run of

things. Recently however my CityCar was damaged by what seems to have been a hit-and-run. I had the car for three hours and parked it outside my home for 30 mins before using it again. In that time, it seems, someone did significant damage to the back lefthand side of the car and then drove off, strapping me with a 2,000 NIS bill from the company. My initial reaction? Upset, very upset. I was bothered that *Hashbem* let this happen to me. I was bothered that someone could be so selfish to cause damage and just leave the scene of the crime. Many of us might feel like doing that, but how many of us can actually do it...stealing from someone else? But as I stewed away against the "criminal," a little voice inside kept saying to me, "Yes, *Hashbem* allowed that to happen me, but not without due cause, MY due cause. I don't know what I did to deserve this, but I can certainly think of several possible causes. I didn't cause this damage directly, but it could not have happened if I wasn't indirectly responsible." There were times when my sense of being robbed and need for justice would stifle that voice, and I would go back to feeling anger towards the perpetrator. Feeling so innocent, I had trouble staying clear about divine justice, and that weakened my *emunab*. Eventually I asked myself, "What about *ain od Milvado*? If I believe that I am an innocent victim, aren't I giving power to the wrong thing?" That's when I understood "Amalek's" role in all of this. He was taking advantage of my lack of clarity about what I did to deserve this, and why it happened now, to make me believe that what occurred had been against the will of God as well. I corrected my thinking by banishing "Amalek" from the equation. I accepted that what happened to me was from God to me and, *was perfectly just*. I paid my bill, and thanked God for helping me to grow a bit more in the area of *Ain Od Milvado*."