


In general, the study hall of Rabbi Boruch was a joyous place. During the Nine Days before Tisha B'Av, however, the atmosphere was rather somber, as if a dark cloud hovered above.

The tzadik himself had disappeared; no one knew where he was. Rumor had it that Rabbi Boruch had disguised himself as a beggar and was wandering from town to town, the better to experience the exile of the Divine Presence.

In the village square stood a wagon driver next to his horses. To all outward appearances he looked like any other wagon driver, but it was really Rabbi Boruch in a new disguise. It didn't take long until a Polish nobleman asked to engage his services.

The tzadik made a quick calculation: If everything went well, he would make it back to town on the day before Tisha B'Av. He agreed to take the nobleman to his destination, and the two set off.

Now, the horses that Rabbi Boruch had procured were not exactly in their prime; the poor specimens could barely pull the wagon and stopped often to rest. The most tranquil of passengers would have found it irritating; how much more so did the Polish nobleman, who was in a hurry to reach his destination. The tzadik was subjected to a steady stream of curses and insults. But he remained silent, feeling acutely the pain and affront to the Divine Presence in exile.

The journey would take several days, and each evening the two travelers sought refuge in an inn. The nobleman obtained the finest accommodations, while Rabbi Boruch slept in the barn with his horses. The tzadik made sure to don his tefilin and pray several hours before the nobleman woke up. Only afterwards would he rouse him to resume their travels.

One morning, however, when Rabbi Boruch knocked on the nobleman's door he received no answer. The nobleman, he soon realized, was in a drunken stupor, having spent the night before carousing with some local peasants. With great difficulty the tzadik managed to haul him over to the wagon and dump him in. Throughout it all, the nobleman remained unconscious.

The next stage of the journey took them through a dense forest. The horses plodded along at their usual sluggish pace, keeping time with the nobleman's loud snores. Rabbi Boruch was lost in thought.

Suddenly, a terrible pain ripped through the tzadik's head. When he woke up he found himself tied to a tree, with the Polish nobleman in similar circumstances. The horses and wagon were gone, but Rabbi Boruch noticed that his prayer book, talit and tefilin had been tossed aside. Immediately he thanked G-d for having saved his life.

Moving his arms and legs the tzadik was able to gradually loosen his bonds. The first thing he did was to pick up his prayer book, talit and tefilin and kiss them. Next he turned his attention to the Polish nobleman, who was still unconscious but appeared to be breathing.

Rabbi Boruch found a stream and splashed some water on the man's face. Nonetheless, it took a few hours until his eyelids fluttered. "What happened?" the nobleman stammered. "Why am I lying on the ground?"

The tzadik told him what had happened, but as soon as he heard the word "robbers" he began to scream. "My money! My money!" Rabbi Boruch tried to calm him down and told him that he should be grateful for being alive, but the nobleman remained extremely agitated and kept looking at the tzadik with barely concealed suspicion.

With no other choice the two set out on foot. After wandering for several days they came upon an encampment of hunters, some of whom were the nobleman's friends. Out of earshot of the wagon driver, the nobleman told them that he suspected his companion of having stolen his money. His suspicion was based on the simple fact that the driver was the only person who had known of its existence.

One hunter suggested that they shoot him immediately, but the oldest member of the party demurred. "Let's tie him to a tree," he proposed. "If he's guilty, he will die. If not, then G-d help him." The tzadik was immediately seized and bound.

Night fell, and Rabbi Boruch's tears flowed freely as he prayed the evening service. From the depths of his heart he implored G-d to save him, his voice echoing back in the eerie silence.

The sound of approaching footsteps suddenly cut off his words. It was the old hunter who had returned, the very one who had objected to killing him. "I wanted to see how you were," he said. "I never thought you were guilty in the first place. The real robbers have just been apprehended and have admitted to everything. It seems that when our foolish friend got drunk the other night, he boasted to everyone about all the money he was carrying."

It was the night of Tisha B'Av when Rabbi Boruch arrived back at the study hall, where his disciples were waiting for him expectantly. And everyone noticed that the tzadik's reading of the Book of Lamentations was especially emotional that year.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

*On the weekly Torah portion*

**The Book of Deuteronomy**

What is the difference between the Book of Deuteronomy and the other four Books of the Torah? In transmitting the first four Books, Moses acted strictly as G-d's emissary, repeating the message word for word without involving his own intellect in the process. Deuteronomy, however, was transmitted precisely through the intellect and understanding of the leader of the generation, in response to the exact needs of the people and its particular spiritual level. Accordingly, Deuteronomy - given to the Jewish people just prior to their entry into the land of Israel, and the new lifestyle it would entail - contains many explanations of concepts that were only alluded to in the first four Books. *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

**Moses began (ho'il) to explain this law (Deut. 1:5)**

The Hebrew word "ho'il" contains the same letters as "Eliyahu" - an allusion to the time to come when Elijah the Prophet will answer all our difficult questions. Also, the questions posed by the last few generations before Moshiach will be complicated and troublesome; their answer will only be found through the same self-sacrifice that was shown by Pinchas, whom our Sages explain was reincarnated as Elijah the Prophet. *(Yalkut Moshe)*

**How can I alone bear your weight, your burden and your strife? (Deut. 1:12)**

As Rashi explains, the "burden" referred to by Moses was the heretics among the Jewish people. Commented Rabbi Nachman of Breslov: "The heaviest burden a person can bear is apostasy. The heart of a Jew who believes in G-d is calm and tranquil, while the heretic must constantly contend with the weight of his doubts and troubling thoughts."

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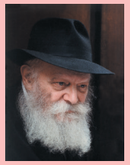
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*"Jerusalem has mountains around it, and the L-rd is around His people from now and to eternity" (Psalms 125:2)*



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

*from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion*

The Torah portion of Devarim (the first portion in the book of the Torah known as Deuteronomy) is always read on Shabbat Chazon (literally "The Sabbath of Vision"), the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av - the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av. As nothing in Judaism is coincidental, the Torah portion of Devarim and Shabbat Chazon must be interconnected.

The Book of Deuteronomy is unique in that, unlike the first four Books of the Torah, it was transmitted by Moses to the generation of Jews that was about to enter the Land of Israel.

The generation of Jews that wandered through the desert is known as "the generation of knowledge." Because they occupied such a high spiritual level, commensurate with Moses', they merited to lead a completely spiritual existence. The generation that entered Israel, by contrast, began a whole new chapter in Jewish history. Because they had to involve themselves in more mundane affairs, their spiritual level is considered to be lower than that of the generation that preceded them.

Nonetheless, it was precisely the generation that entered Israel that was able to successfully fulfill G-d's plan. G-d wants us to serve Him within the context of the material world, establishing a "dwelling place" for Him in the "lower realms."

Accordingly, although the Jews who entered Israel were spiritually inferior in comparison with their parents, they possessed a certain advantage over their elders: The Jews who entered Israel merited to attain a level of "peace and security" that was denied the previous generation.

Shabbat Devarim is thus a resolution of two opposites. On the one hand, the Jews' entry into the Land of Israel was a very great descent, for it signified the need for daily contact with worldly matters. On the other hand, it was precisely by means of this descent that they were able to attain the highest ascent of all: the fulfillment of G-d's plan.

Likewise, Shabbat Chazon is a study in contradiction. Shabbat Chazon occurs in the middle of the Nine Days, a period in which we mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple. Yet, at the same time, as the famous Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev explained, on Shabbat Chazon every Jew is shown a vision of the Third Holy Temple, an edifice that will be infinitely superior to the two Holy Temples that preceded it.

Thus Shabbat Chazon expresses the same theme of descent for the purpose of ascent as Devarim: It is precisely through the descent which caused the Temple's destruction in the first place that we will achieve the highest ascent of all: the establishment of the Third Holy Temple by Moshiach, may it happen at once.

*Adapted from Likutei Sichot, vol. 2*

## Memory

*By Rabbi Yossy Goldman*

On Tishah B'Av, we recall the destruction of our Holy Temple nearly 2,000 years ago by fasting and mourning and the other observances of the day.

For over 19 centuries, we have been remembering and observing this event and it has become the saddest day in our calendar. Why? Why not let bygones be bygones? It's history. Why keep revisiting old and painful visions?

They say that Napoleon was once passing through the Jewish ghetto in Paris and heard sounds of wailing emanating from a synagogue. He stopped to ask what the lament was about. He was told that the Jews were remembering the destruction of their Temple. "When did it happen?" asked the Emperor. "Some 1700 years ago," was the answer he received. Whereupon Napoleon stated with conviction that a people who never forgot its past would be destined to forever have a future.

Jews never had history. We have memory. History can become a book, a museum, and forgotten antiquities. Memory is alive. And memory guarantees our future.

Even amidst the ruins, we refused to forget. The first temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. As they led the Jews into captivity, the Jews sat down and wept. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept remembering Zion." What did we cry for? Our lost wealth, homes and businesses? No. We cried for Zion and Jerusalem. Amidst the bondage, we aspired to rebuild; amidst the ruins we dreamt of returning.And because we refused to forget Jerusalem, we did return.

We have rebuilt proud Jewish communities the world over, while our victors have been vanquished by time. Today there are no more Babylonians while we, inspired by memory, emerged revitalized and regenerated and forever it will be true that Am Yisrael Chai — the people of Israel lives!

A Torah scholar and his nephew studied the Talmud together in the concentration camp during the Holocaust. When the time came that the uncle saw himself staring death in the face, he said to his nephew, "Promise me that if you survive you will finish studying this book of the Talmud." Amidst the misery, desolation and tragedy, what thought preoccupied his mind? That the Talmud should still be studied. This was his last wish on earth.

Only if we refuse to forget, can we hope to rebuild one day. Indeed, the Talmud assures us, "Whosoever mourns for Jerusalem, will merit to witness her rejoicing." We need to observe our National Day of Mourning. Forego the movies and the restaurants. Sit down on a low seat to mourn with your people; and perhaps even more importantly, to remember. And, please G-d, He will restore those glorious days and rebuild His own everlasting house. May it be speedily in our day.

L'Chaim L'Chaim L'Chaim