

Chodesh Teves



GLOBAL WOMEN'S LEARNING CAMPAIGN

לע"נ הרב מנחם מענדל ע"ה בן
'יבלח"ט הרב ישראל שיחי

חודש טבת

Chodesh Teves is typically the coldest and darkest month of the year. The sun rises later and sets earlier and gives off little warmth. It is said about this month that "הגוף נהנה מן הגוף" the body enjoys being close to the body of others during this time in order to draw comfort and warmth.

חסידות teaches that everything that happens in the world is reflection of a spiritual reality.

The fact that the winter months are darker and that the summer months are lighter is not just a physical reality.

The duration of sunlight directly corresponds to how much revelation of Hashem there is in the world.

During the summer the נשמה is drawn to spirituality. It can more easily feel passion and love for Hashem and it wants to be close to Him. He learns תורה and does מצות and the body is merely a tool to be able to put its desires into practice. The person has a relationship with Hashem that feels natural and easy. Conversely, during the winter the נשמה doesn't feel that inspiration. There is more apathy and disconnect and distance. The גוף, the body, and physicality take priority.

COMPARISON TO A MARRIAGE

A Yid's relationship with Hashem is often compared to a marriage.

When the marriage is doing well, when there is a natural, warm connection then there is no reason to think too deeply about the relationship. However, during a time of coldness and distance, a person can feel disturbed about the state of the relationship. The knowledge that essentially the couple are really one נשמה and have always been destined to be married to one another, can awaken within a connection that is bigger and deeper and more real than any petty disagreements. The connection then becomes deeper, one of an essential bond, not dependent on any frills or externalities.

This is the עבודה of חודש טבת. Specifically in the month when there is less revelation of Hashem in the world a person can tap into a deeper connection to Hashem. A connection that is more essential than fleeting passions or interests.

הגוף נהנה מן הגוף



This is why this month is described as, הגוף נהנה מן הגוף, the body enjoys the body.

The highest level of Hashem עצמות, is known in קבלה as גוף. So the גוף, the high level of Hashem, enjoys the עבודה of איד that comes from the גוף, the physical part of person that lacks spirituality or inspiration. Hashem (the גוף) enjoys the איד who serves Hashem in an uninspired way (the גוף way). When one does what one has too, and pushes forward despite the difficulty this shows a unique, special relationship with Hashem. Of course relating to Hashem with love and passion is ideal, but when this is lacking we can see the bedrock and foundations underneath, and this encourages us that nothing at all can break the bond.

עשרה בטבת

On Asara B'Teves the walls of ירושלים were surrounded. This was a major first step in the ultimate destruction of the בית המקדש. The times of the בית המקדש were of great revelation and light, open miracles were seen every day and there was a strong feeling of closeness to Hashem. Starting from the events on עשרה בטבת, we found ourselves in a dark גלות. However, specifically because of this feeling of distance from Hashem, אידן were forced to dig deeper and reveal a connection to Hashem that is in some ways greater than before. We hope to once again see the revelations of the בית המקדש, but with its destruction, the true indestructible relationship between the אידן and Hashem has been revealed.



כ"ד טבת

The Alter Rebbe's histalkus was on Chof Daled Teves. There used to be an assumption that a person's emunah and passion for Hashem were in direct contradiction to a person's *sechel*, his cold logic and understanding. A person could feel inspired by a strong feeling of bitachon but then he would feel his logic start to creep up on him. He would consider this logic cold, as a negative force, and would work to push it away from disturbing his bitachon and his inspiration. The Alter Rebbe intellectualized Chassidus and showed that emunah and bitachon, inspiration, love for Hashem, can all be explained logically, and then can actually become more anchored. He explained how passion and warmth is important but when rooted in logic it becomes even stronger.

ESSENTIAL BOND

We should strive to connect to Hashem at all times. The message of the month of Teves is that even if you don't feel like doing the mitzvah, or keeping the halacha as you should, find the inner strength to do it anyway. Your negative feelings aren't a reflection of something negative about you. You are not less than because you don't really want to and you don't really care. To the contrary, therein lies your true greatness. The darkness works as an advantage because it shows that you are doing the right and good things even though you're not feeling it now. Your connection to Hashem is rock solid, deep and real, and your actions reflect your deeper, more essential connection to Hashem. Hang in there, put one foot in front of the other, do one good thing, then another. And iy"H soon we'll be zoche to the truest brightest revelation of light with Moshiach.

STORY

"But the courts in Los Angeles annulled my marriage," Sharon insisted. "Rabbi, it happened such a long time ago, and it only lasted six hours - - a stupid mistake. Done, finished, forgotten forever!"

Rabbi Chaim Mentz, the Chabad-Lubavitch emissary in Bel Air, California, listened sympathetically. He really felt for Sharon and Andrew, a nice young couple who wanted him to officiate at their upcoming marriage.

"I understand how you feel, Sharon," he explained patiently. "But you see, Jewish law prohibits marriage if the bride or groom had been married before but not divorced according to Jewish law. A court annulment is not enough. A proper bill of divorce, a get, must be obtained."

Sharon and Andrew looked devastated.

"Don't worry," Rabbi Mentz calmed them. "We're dealing with a formality, but behind this formality lies the truism that everything a person does has meaning, and so no action should be taken lightly. I will assist you in the procedure and things will work out for the best."

"Yeah," Sharon thought to herself. "I wonder what good can come from adding extra hassles to my six-page-long list of things to do."

With the rabbi's guidance, Sharon contacted the Beis Din in Los Angeles, and in a matter of weeks she had the get in hand. The rabbi at the Beis Din wished her well. "Now you can go about planning your upcoming marriage with joy and peace of mind," he concluded warmly.

"We have it all planned already," Sharon assured him with a smile, "We're getting married on the fifth of December."

The rabbi shook his head with concern. "Oh dear, I'm sorry you didn't mention that earlier. You see, Jewish law requires that in a case such as yours, you must wait three months before marrying. As you have already demonstrated a high regard for the law, you will surely continue to do so as you begin your new life. May you be blessed in all your endeavors."

The first thing Sharon did was call Andrew, then she called Rabbi Mentz.

"Rabbi," she blurted. "I can't believe this! All our plans, the wedding, our honeymoon! You mean we have to reschedule everything?!"

Rabbi Mentz gently explained the law and its reasons, and encouraged Sharon and Andrew to abide by it. "Judaism maintains that G-d is the active third party in every marriage. You'll be demonstrating how important it is to have Him as a partner in your life."

After some consideration, Sharon and Andrew informed Rabbi Mentz that they would comply with the law, and they rescheduled their wedding for January 23, 2005.

On December 26, they realized just how vital to their lives their Third Partner was. This would have been one of the last days of the honeymoon they had originally planned, and they would have been spending it at the now famous Kaafu Atoll Maldives Hotel on Lankanfushi Island. The room they had reserved was one of those swept away by the devastating tsunami of December 2004!

From "Excuse me are you Jewish" by Malka Touger