

The Shul
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July 15, 2017

Pinchas

21 Tamuz, 5777

If Not Now, When?

The great Rabbi Hillel was known to say, "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?"

Though stated more than 20 centuries ago, Hillel's words sound like great, middle-of-the-road advice to all of us, including the post-millennial Generation Z population.

Basically, it sounds like Hillel is telling us, "You have to look out for number one, but make sure not to forget that there are other people in the world, too."

Sounds pretty sane, doesn't it?

Actually, though, Hillel wasn't talking about our typical pursuits; he was giving us a deep insight into how we should view our involvement in spiritual pursuits and lofty goals.

Hillel was talking about taking responsibility for ourselves spiritually and building up our own cache of mitzvot. Thus, we shouldn't expect to fall back on the good deeds, mitzva observance, or the piety of our ancestors.

On a more personal level, it is a statement about how we must be self-motivated when it comes to Judaism. I can't expect anyone else to take me by the hand and lead me, step by step, toward growth and advancement. I have to do it myself. I can't sit back, relax, and wait to be inspired by an amazing teacher or encouraged by a friend. It's up to me: If I am not for myself, who is for me?

To be more specific, we can't expect G-d to be the one to push us, either. I can't say, "If G-d really wanted me to give lots of charity, have time to pursue Jewish studies, and not work on Shabbat, He'd arrange for me to win the lottery." Or, "If G-d wants me to do this particular mitzva, He'll remove all obstacles from my path."

On the other hand, if I am only for myself, if I am so caught up with and involved in my own personal growth and advancement, that I'm not around to help or guide others, what am I? Just because I can't expect or wait for someone else to hold my hand or inspire me, doesn't exempt me from extending my hand to someone else. It doesn't absolve me from reaching out to another person, from teaching someone else the Hebrew alphabet if I know it and he doesn't – even if the alef-bet is all I know!

The only remaining question one might have after considering Hillel's statements in this light would be, "When should I start getting serious about learning, growing, advancing? And when do I have to begin reaching out to others?" To this, Hillel has a ready reply, actually the closing words of his statement: "If not now, when?"

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

The Time is Now!

Following the apportionment of the Land of Israel based on patrilineal tribe, "the daughters of Tzelofchod son of Chefer son of Gilad son of Machir son of Menashe, of the families of Menashe son of Yosef (Joseph), drew near... and stood before Moshe and before Elazar the Kohen and before the leaders and before the entire assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, saying, 'Our father died in the wilderness ... and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father be omitted from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers.'" (Bamidbar/Numbers 27:1-4).

The Medrash Yalkut Shimoni (chapter 773) expounds upon this episode: Every upright person who lives in a generation of evil earns the right to the reward of the entire generation. At what time had the daughters of Tzelofchod stood before Moshe? At the moment after the Nation of Israel expressed their desire to return to Egypt (following the death of Aaron, which, with the loss of his merit, caused the loss of the protective clouds of glory and following an unsuccessful skirmish with Amalek). Moshe told the daughters, "The Jewish people are requesting to return to Egypt and you are requesting a portion in the Promised Land!" The young women replied, "We know that our national destiny is possession of the Land; [our response is based upon] the verse (Tehillim/Psalms 119:126), 'It is a time to act for G-d; they have voided your Torah': because they have voided your Torah [forsaking the promise of the Land of Israel, for us] it is a time to act for G-d!"

(continued on the other side)

Michtav MeEliyahu (collected writings and discourses of Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1891-1954) of London and B'nai Brak, one of the outstanding personalities and thinkers of the Mussar movement) notes that there are times in the human experience that there is no apparent hope of success for our service of G-d. Yet, somehow, against all rational expectations, there IS success. History has its Avraham and its Noah. These are the paradigms of "those who earn the reward of the entire generation". Those who live in a time of spiritual "blindness" and, nevertheless, strive for spiritual growth and G-d consciousness are granted special Divine assistance to accomplish.

Hopelessness, such as that of the Children of Israel as they faced the "setbacks" immediately prior to their entry to the Promised Land, is rooted in the deception of accepting the present perspective – with its gloom-filled appearance as the entirety of the situation, rather than appreciating that the current frame is but one of a lengthy progression, of images. When we feel we are "the masters" of a sequence of events and anticipate the challenges we are to face, there is no fear. But when we sense we have no control of our fate and are unsure what the Master of the Universe has in store, then we despair. If only we could see the great revelation of light and salvation that awaits us beyond the darkness. And, concludes Rabbi Dessler, by fortifying our hope and banishing despair we will actually bring that bright moment quicker yet.

Rabbi Dessler wrote his essay in late 5708 (1948), following modern history's greatest demonstration of anti-Semitism and with our brethren in the Holy Land in the midst of a war for their survival. With the potential for hopelessness that defined that era in Jewish history, Rabbi Dessler beamed with the conviction that the challenges of his times spoke to them, declaring that the arrival of the Messiah must be that much more imminent. With the tribulations of our times, we know that, as long as he may tarry, his arrival is ever closer!

(by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Mr. Ariel and Mrs. Esty Goodman are co-sponsoring Kiddush this Shabbat in memory of Ariel's father, **Kalman Chaim ben Avraham (Karl Goodman)**.



Rabbi and Mrs. Shalom Zirklind are co-sponsoring Kiddush this Shabbat in memory of Shalom's father, **Harav Simcha Yerachmiel ben Mordechai Shachna**.

Yahrzeits This Week:

Ariel Goodman	22 Tamuz - Saturday night/Sunday	for father	Kalman Chaim ben Avraham
Rabbi Shalom Zirklind	24 Tamuz - Monday night/Tuesday	for father	Harav Simcha Yerachmiel ben Mordechai Shachna
Jeffrey London	27 Tamuz - Thursday night/Friday	for sister	Sora Tivka bas Yaakov
Larry London	27 Tamuz - Thursday night/Friday	for sister	Sora Tivka bas Yaakov

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Davening and Shiurim Schedule

Friday, 7/14 – 20 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 7/15 – 21 Tamuz
 Shacharit – 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:30 a.m.
 Berachot Gemara Shiur — 7:00 p.m.
 Minchah & Seudah Shilishit — 8:00 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 9:16 p.m.

Sunday, 7/16 – 22 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:10 p.m.

Monday, 7/17 – 23 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:10 p.m.

Tuesday, 7/18 – 24 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Mincha/Ma'ariv — 8:10 p.m.

Wednesday, 7/19 – 25 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:10 p.m.

Thursday, 7/20 – 26 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:10 p.m.

Friday, 7/21 – 27 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Candles — 8:09 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.