



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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Light Insight

No Switzerland

*“And you who cling to the Lord, your G-d — you are alive, all of you, today.”
(Deuteronomy 4:4)*

There's an old non-Jewish philosophical dispute about the nature of Man's connection to the Infinite One. Some say that G-d is so above us that we need an intermediary. Others say that in this world it is impossible to be in contact with G-d; that only after death is this possible. Still others say that while it's possible in this life to have a relationship with G-d,

only unique individuals can attain to this; the vast majority of us, they say, will not succeed. And lastly, there are those who say that true contact with G-d is only possible after a life-time of work and effort.

The Torah teaches us that none of these philosophies is accurate. All Jews, on any level and at any time, are capable of a close relationship with G-d.

We can see this hinted in the above verse: “And you who cling to The Lord, your G-d — you are alive, all of you, today;” Meaning:

“And you who cling to the

Lord...” Directly to G-d — you don't need intermediaries. You don't need the neutral ground of an intercessor. Between the Jewish People and G-d there is no “Switzerland.”

“...you are alive...” You can have this contact in this world as well. You don't have to pass on to the next world to be close to G-d.

“...all of you...” It is the birthright of the entire Jewish nation to have this connection with the Creator, not just unique individuals.

“...today...” Being close to G-d is not predicated on a lifetime's work and struggle, you can have it today — if you want it.

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Mount Tavor

When the Prophetess Devorah called upon Barak ben Avinoam in the name of G-d to gather ten thousand soldiers from the bribes of Naftali and Zebulun in order to free Israel from the yoke of

Canaanite oppression, she directed him to confront the mighty forces led by Sisra at Mount Tavor. It was on this lofty mountain in the north of the Land of Israel that G-d granted the outnumbered and outarmed Israelite forces a miraculous victory over their enemies.

Because it was destined to be

the scene of such a great miracle, Mount Tavor asked that the Torah be given to Israel there. Its claim was rejected, says the Midrash, because idols had been worshipped there, and Mount Sinai was chosen instead. In the end of days, however, Mount Tavor will regain its glory, when G-d will bring it together with Mount Sinai and Mount Carmel and build the third and final Holy Temple upon them.

The Tragedies of Tisha B'Av

Jewish Year (common calendar year)

2448 (1312) Spies return from 40 days in Israel with evil reports of the Land of Israel. Jewish people cry in despair, give up hope of entering the Land of Israel.

3340 (421) Destruction of First Temple by the Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar. About 100,000 Jews killed during invasion. Exile of remaining tribes in southern kingdom to Babylon and Persia.

3830 70 Destruction of Second Temple by Romans, under Titus. Over 2,500,000 Jews die as a result of war, famine and disease. Over 1,000,000 Jews exiled to all parts of the Roman Empire. Over 100,000 Jews sold as slaves by Romans. Jews killed and tortured in gladiatorial "games" and pagan celebrations.

3892 132 Bar Kochba revolt crushed. Betar destroyed - over 100,000 killed.

3893 133 Turnus Rufus ploughs site of Temple. Romans build pagan city of Aelia Capitolina on site of Jerusalem.

4855 1095 First Crusade declared by Pope Urban II. 10,000 Jews killed in first month of Crusade. Crusades bring death and destruction to thousands of Jews, totally obliterate many communities in Rhineland and France.

5050 1290 Expulsion of Jews from England, accompanied by pogroms and confiscation of books and property.

5252 1492 Inquisition in Spain and Portugal culminates in the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula. Families separated, many die by drowning, massive loss of property.

5674 1914 Britain and Russia declare war on Germany. First World War begins. First World War issues unresolved, ultimately causing Second World War and Holocaust. 75% of all Jews in war zones killed. Jews in armies of all sides - 120,000 Jewish casualties in armies. Over 400 pogroms immediately following war in Hungary, Ukraine, Poland and Russia.

5702 1942 Deportations from Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka concentration camp begin.

5749 1989 Iraq walks out of talks with Kuwait.

Response Line

John Padavic wrote:

Last weekend after the shootings in Chicago, it was reported that the Jewish victims would not talk to the police until after the Sabbath. Does Jewish law forbid Jews from talking to the police on the Sabbath, even when the shooter was still at large, and other people were in danger?

Dear John,

Let me tell you a story: A man walks up to a newsstand and asks for a newspaper. "Two dollars, please," says the storekeeper.

"Two dollars! It's only a dollar and a half. It says so right here," he says, pointing to the words "Price: \$1.50" on top of the front page in bold print.

"You believe everything you read in the paper?" says the storekeeper.

The media reports are simply false. I know some of the Jewish people involved in Chicago, and they did cooperate with the police fully on Shabbos. This is in accordance with the principle that human life overrides Shabbos.

I personally spoke to Dr. Benzion Allswang, an orthodox Jew from Chicago, who was there at the shootings. Dr. Allswang was walking to synagogue when the killer pulled up in his car. A loud noise came from the car. Since it was the 4th of July weekend, Dr. Allswang thought it was some sort of prankster throwing a firecracker. The car pulled closer and fired another three shots. Allswang felt some wind, but that was all. The shooter drove off and Allswang flagged down a policeman.

Not until 11:30 that night, on Shabbos, did Allswang notice the hole in his shirt in the vicinity of the abdomen. Two minutes later the police arrived to further investigate the incident and he told them the whole story again. The police asked to see his jacket. There were three bullet holes in his jacket! Only then did he realize the extent of the miracle. "I recited the special *hagomel* (thanksgiving) blessing the next day with more thankfulness and concentration than I'd ever prayed before!"