



# CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space...Grow at your pace.

Jan 2-3, 2015 ■ 12 Teves, 5775 ■ Shabbos Vayechi  
Candlelighting: 5:15P ■ Shabbos Ends 6:24P

Kiddush this Shabbos is sponsored by Hillel and Ayelet Penrod in honor of their son's Upsherin on his third birthday. May this be his first step towards a lifetime of toiling in Torah and growing close to HaShem. Shalosh Seudos this Shabbos is sponsored by the shul. Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich at 972-835-6016 if you are interested in sponsoring kiddush or shalosh seudos in the future.

## ■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

### Friday Night, Jan 2<sup>nd</sup>

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-5:15P at shul
- » Candlelighting-5:15P

### Shabbos Day, Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>

- » Shacharis-8:30A
- » Junior Congregation for boys-9:30A
- » Mommy & Me at Sutkin home (BYOS)-9:45A
- » Chumash Shiur (for men & women)-4:05P at shul
- » Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men-5:05P at shul
- » Shalosh Seudos for women-5:05P at Rich home
- » Shabbos Ends-6:24P
- » Avos U'Banim-7:25P (Suggested Min. Donation \$5)

## ■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Hilchos Ta'aruvos-6:30A (for men)
- » Sunday Shacharis-8A (for men)
- » Supercharge Your Sundays-8:45A (for men)
- » Weekday Shacharis-6:40A
- » Mincha-5:20P / Maariv-9:00P (Sunday-Thursday)

## ■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

### MEN

- » Yoseif Yitzchok ben Yehudis Chaya (Brother in Law of Yoseif Meir Rich)
- » Mattisyahu Chaim ben Ettel (HaRav Mattisyahu Solomon)

### WOMEN

- » Brocha bas Sora (Mother of Hadassah Klug)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

## ■ WHAT'S NU AT CTC

- » **Father-Son Learning for Boys** Avos U'Banim will also take place on Motzei Shabbos 7:25-8:25P. The children are rewarded with Pizza, Cocoa and Prizes for their efforts. All boys are invited to attend with their father or another adult. We are asking for a contribution of \$5 per attending family per session, to help allay the costs to the shul. A small cost for infinite rewards!

## ■ THE MOST BASIC QUESTION: RABBI LABEL LAM

Then Yaakov called for his sons and said, "Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in "The End of Days". Gather yourselves and listen, O sons of Yaakov, and listen to Israel your father. (Bereishis 49:1)

When they had assembled they thought they would hear a litany of blessings and consolations. Yaakov our father answered and said to them, "Avraham my father's father had blemished children that came out from him, Yishmael and all the children of Keturah. From my father Yitzchok issued, my brother Eisav who was disqualified. I am afraid that that there might be amongst you a person whose heart is divided from his brothers and goes to serve other gods". All twelve tribes responded simultaneously and said, "Listen (our father) Israel HASHEM is OUR G-D HASHEM is the ONE and ONLY." At that moment Jacob our father answered, "Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity!" (Talmud- Yerushalmi) What was Yaakov's big fear in the waning moments of his life here in this world? How had his children consoled him? Every normal and decent parent wants to be surrounded by his beloved family and to see them together in the end. How was Yaakov any different? He was not content to have everyone rally around and make overtures of allegiance. He wanted something more, a specified commitment! What exactly did Yaakov want that they were able to successfully satisfy his dying wish?

Years ago I was blindsided by a statement. A presenter was telling a group of "minority" students we were guiding through a museum, "To know where you are going in life, you have to know where you come from!" Referring to me he emphatically declared, "He's a son of Abraham", looking

at me, "right!?"

After a few awkward moments and after realizing that nothing pejorative had been implied I simply said, "That's right!" Having agreed publicly to such a thing the words owned me. I rushed home and took hold of the old dusty Bible I had received from the sisterhood on the occasion of my bar-mitzvah.

I started to read about Abraham. Amazed to find a portrait of my ancient relative I felt like someone who had dusted off a box in the attic uncovering an amazing family tree dense with pictures and rich with history.

For weeks I obsessed with the idea that I know who my great-great-grandfather is going back 3700 years. I researched whether anyone else had any credible information about relatives going that far back down the highway of history. I felt uniquely proud as a Jew and saw myself in a much larger context. Next my mind shifted from the perspective of the present looking backward to a view from the past projecting forward. I wondered what Abraham had done that now his children's children 3700 hundred years hence would not only know of him but hold him in such high esteem. I wondered what I would have to do or be that my children should care or know who I was and what I lived for?

Attempting to mine out and discover an answer, I recorded some thoughts in a personal diary. I imagined a small stone entering a still glass-like surface of a lake, sending out ever widening co-centric circles till the stone settles and the water becomes quiet and smooth again. I penned, "Pebbles in ponds are our ponderings, but boulders in oceans were our fathers' notions whose waves still rock the sea, whose waves still rock the sea!"

Now I imagined a giant stone hitting the earth thousands of years ago and settling to the bottom of the ocean. We don't know the velocity with which it hit or the mass of the object but we can only begin to estimate the awesome size by the fact that the ocean is still ebbing and flowing strongly thousands of years later from its impact.

What became clear to me was that Avraham's longevity was not due to his military might or political connections but rather it was because of his clarity about a certain profound idea. I wanted to know what that idea was and that launched me on a journey that has not and shall never cease. Yaakov, I believe wanted to be certain his children would be a nation of that notion.

## ■ THE MANY FACETS OF ASARAH B'TEVES: RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

Although to many the only notable aspect of the upcoming fast of Asarah B'Teves (the 10th of Teves) is that it is by far the shortest fast day in the Jewish calendar for anyone in the Northern Hemisphere (my heartfelt sympathies to the South Americans, So'Africans, Aussies, and Kiwis), nonetheless, the Fast of Asarah B'Teves is quite unique. For example, unique to this fast, is that it is the only one that we do actually observe as on a Friday. Even Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the actual destructions of our Batei HaMikdash, gets pushed off. Yet, obviously, to maintain this distinction of being the only Fast Day that we actually do observe and fast on Friday, there must be much more to the Fast of Asarah B'Teves than meets the eye. It turns out that Asarah B'Teves has several exceptional characteristics that are not found in any other fast day.

**Why This Fast?** The reason given for fasting on Asarah B'Teves is that it is the day that the wicked Babylonian king Nevuchadnetzar started his siege of Yerushalayim, foreshadowing the beginning of the end of the first Beis Hamikdash, which culminated with its destruction on Tisha B'Av several years later. Therefore, Chazal declared it a public fast, one of four public fast days that memorialize different aspects of the catastrophes and national tragedies associated with the destruction of both Batei HaMikdash.

**Three-Day Fast?** According to the special Selichos prayers said on the fast, a unique aspect of Asarah B'Teves is that we are actually fasting for two other days of tragedy as well; the 8th and 9th of Teves. In fact, both the Tur and Shulchan Aruch assert that if possible one should try to fast on all three days. Nevertheless, of the three, only Asarah B'Teves was actually

mandated as a public fast day.

**The 8th of Teves** On the 8th of Teves, King Ptolemy II (285 – 246 B.C.E.) forced 72 sages separately to translate the Torah into Greek (the Septuagint). Although miracles guided their work and all of the sages made the same slight but necessary amendments, nevertheless this work is described as “darkness descending on the world for three days”, as it was now possible for the uneducated to possess a superficial, and frequently flawed, understanding of the Torah, as well as providing the masses with a mistaken interpretation of true morality.

**The 9th of Teves** Although several decisors write that the reason for fasting on the 9th of Teves is unknown, nonetheless many sources, including the Kol Bo and the Selichos recited on Asarah B’Teves, as well as many later authorities, explain that this is the day on which Ezra HaSofer (as well as possibly his partner Nechemiah) died. Ezra, the Gadol HaDor at the beginning of the time of the Second Beis HaMikdash, had a tremendous impact upon the nascent returning Jewish community of Eretz Yisrael. He drastically improved the spiritual state of the Jewish people and established many halachic takanos, many of which still apply today. With his passing, the community started sliding from the great spiritual heights Ezra had led them to. Additionally, since Ezra was the last of the prophets, his passing signified the end of prophecy.

Other sources attribute fasting on this day to the passing of other specific Tzaddikim on this day, including Shimon HaKalphus and Rav Yosef HaNaggid, or the birth of ‘Oso Halsh’, the founder of Christianity, in whose name myriads of Jews over the millennia were r’l murdered (see extensive footnote 9). The Sefer HaToda’ah posits that it’s possible that “darkness descended on the world for three days” alludes to the triple woes of these three days: the 8th, 9th, and 10th of Teves.

**Fasting on Friday?** Another exclusive characteristic of Asarah B’Teves is that, as mentioned previously, it is the only fast that can fall out on a Friday. This is fairly interesting as there is a whole debate in the Gemara about how to conduct fasts on a Friday, when we also must take kavod Shabbos into account, implying that it is a common occurrence. However, according to our calendar, a Friday fast is only applicable with Asarah B’Teves, and it happens quite infrequently. The last few times Asarah B’Teves fell out on a Friday were in 1996, 2001, 2010, and last year, 2013. It is next expected to occur in 2020 (5781). After that, 2023 (5784), 2025 (5785), 2034 (5795), and 2037 (5798).

**Halachos of a Friday Fast** The halachos of a Friday fast generally parallel those of a regular fast day. In fact, even though there is some debate in the Rishonim as to the Gemara’s intent that ‘Halacha – Mesaneh U’ Mashlim – a Friday fast should be completed’ whether or not one may be mekabel Shabbos early and thereby end the fast before nightfall. Nonetheless, the halacha follows the Shulchan Aruch and Rema that since Asarah B’Teves is a public fast (Taanis Tzibbur) and not a Taanis Yachid, one must fast the whole day and complete it at nightfall (Tzeis HaKochavim) before making Kiddush.

There are those who maintain it is preferable to daven Maariv earlier than usual on such a Friday night, to enable making Kiddush, and breaking the fast, exactly at Tzeis HaKochavim.

**A Shabbos Fast?!** The third and possibly most important attribute of Asarah B’Teves is that according to the AbuDraham, if Asarah B’Teves would potentially fall out on Shabbos, we would all actually be required to fast on Shabbos! (Notwithstanding that, with our calendar, this is an impossibility.) He cites proof to this from the words of Yechezkel referring to Asarah B’Teves (Ch. 24, verse 2) that the siege transpired “B’Ezem HaYom HaZeh”, implying that the fast must always be observed on that

exact day, no matter the conflicting occurrence. This would also explain why it is observed on Friday, as opposed to any other fast.

Yet, the AbuDraham’s statement is astounding, as the only fast that halachically takes precedence over Shabbos is Yom Kippur, the only biblically mandated fast. How can one of the rabbinic minor fasts push off the biblical Shabbos? Additionally, Asarah B’Teves commemorates merely the start of the siege, and not any actual destruction. How can it be considered a more important fast than Tisha B’Av, which commemorates the destruction and loss of both of our Batei HaMikdash? In fact, the Beis Yosef questions this declaration of the AbuDraham, stating that he “does not know how the AbuDraham could know” such a ruling. As an aside, this does not seem to be the actual halacha, as other Rishonim, including Rashi and the Rambam, both explicitly state that if Asarah B’Teves falls out on Shabbos it gets pushed off.

**Commencement Is Catastrophic** Several authorities, including Rav Yonason Eibenschutz and the Bnei Yissaschar, understand the AbuDraham’s enigmatic statement as similar to the famous Gemara in Taanis (29a) regarding Tisha B’Av. It seems that historically the Beis HaMikdash only started to burn toward the end of the 9th of Av (Tisha B’Av) and actually burned down on the 10th. Yet, Chazal established the fast on the 9th, since Aschalta D’Paranusah Adifa, meaning that the beginning of a tragedy is considered the worst part. Likewise, they maintain that since the siege on Asarah B’Teves was the commencement of the long chain of tragedies that ended with the Beis HaMikdash in ruins and the Jewish people in exile, its true status belies the common perception of it as a minor fast, and potentially has the ability to push off Shabbos. Indeed, the Midrash Tanchuma teaches that it was already fitting for the Bais HaMikdash to actually be destroyed on Asarah B’Teves, but Hashem, in His incredible mercy, pushed the destruction off to the summertime, so that we would not have to be exiled in the cold. Hence, Asarah B’Teves’s role as the ‘beginning of the end’ underlies the severity of this fast day.

The famed Chasam Sofer takes this a step further. He wrote that the reason Chazal established a fast for the siege on Asarah B’Teves, as opposed to every other time Yerushalayim was under siege over the millennia, is that on that day in the Heavenly Courtroom it was decided that the Bais HaMikdash was to be destroyed a few years hence. There is a well-known Talmudic dictum that any generation in which the Beis HaMikdash has not been rebuilt, is as if it has been destroyed again. Therefore, he explains, every Asarah B’Teves the Heavenly Court convenes and decrees a new Churban. He adds though that, conversely, a proper fast on Asarah B’Teves has the potential to avert future Churbanos. We are not fasting exclusively due to past calamities, but rather, similar to a Taanis Chalom, we fast for a dream, to help prevent a tragedy from occurring. [He even refers to such a fast as an oneg, a delight.] That is why the fast of Asarah B’Teves, even though it is considered a minor fast, nonetheless has the potential to possibly override Shabbos. These explanations would also certainly elucidate why we would fast on a Friday for Asarah B’Teves.

The Rambam famously exhorts us to remember the real meaning underlying a fast day. It’s not just a day when we miss our morning coffee! The purpose of fasting is to focus on the spiritual side of the day and use it as a catalyst for inspiration towards Teshuva. In this merit may the words of the Navi Zechariah – “The Fast of the Fourth (month, 17th of Tamuz), the Fast of the Fifth (month, Tisha B’Av), the Fast of the Seventh (month, Tzom Gedalyah), and the Fast of the Tenth (month, Asarah B’Teves), shall be (changed over) for celebration and joy for the household of Yehuda” – be fulfilled speedily and in our days.

# Good Shabbos

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## ■ WEEKLY CLASSES (see website for more detail)

- » Morning Gemara Rosh Hashana for men (M–Fr, 6–6:35A)
- » NQ Daf HaYomi Succah for men (Sunday–Thursday 8–9P)
- » Chumash for men & women (Shabbos one hr before mincha)
- » Hilchos Taaruvos for men (Sunday 6:30–8:00A)
- » Supercharge Your Sundays for men (Sunday after Shacharis for 45 mins. with R’ Noach Klug)
- » Marriage Chaburah for men (Monday 7:15–8:00P)
- » Marriage Chaburah for women (Tuesday 7:15–8:00P)

All classes at 7103 Mumford Ct., except where indicated