



**RABBI JUDAH**

**MISCHEL**

Mashpiah, OU-NCSY  
Executive Director, Camp HASC  
Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

# Chazon: If Only!

In the mid 1960's, renowned philosopher, author and educator Professor Abraham Joshua Heschel, z'l, was chairman of the rabbinic program admissions committee at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. One day, while interviewing an applicant in the midst of the entrance exam, Professor Heschel asked the young man how he had traveled to the seminary that morning. The aspiring scholar replied that he had taken the train and because of the nice weather, got off at an earlier stop on Broadway and walked from West 70th Street up to the seminary on 120th.

Professor Heschel smiled at the applicant and asked, "Tell me then, on your way here, did you see the homeless woman on 96th Street? She was probably covered in a blanket and holding a hand painted cardboard sign...? The student said he had not.

"Did you notice the army veteran on 118th street? The fellow with a scraggly gray beard and few teeth? He often wears a baseball cap..." Once again, the student shook his head and replied that he had not.

"What about the tall fellow with dreadlocks

standing outside of Zabar's waving his hands wildly in the air in prayer? Heschel asked. The student said, meekly, "I guess I wasn't paying attention."

Looking the young applicant directly in the eye, Heschel's brow furrowed and wondered out loud, "How can you become a rabbi if you don't even see the human beings around you?"

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Gemara Sanhedrin (98a) recounts an auspicious meeting between Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi and Eliyahu haNavi at the entrance of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai's cave. Rebbe Yehoshua seized the moment and asked Eliyahu haNavi when Moshiach will arrive and *Am Yisrael* will be redeemed. Eliyahu responded, "My friend, go and ask him yourself! You will find him sitting in tattered clothing among the poor and sick who are begging for *tzedakah* at the gate of Rome.

Rebbe Yehoshua made a mystical journey to the gates of Rome, and indeed he found Moshiach sitting in the dirt, surrounded by the destitute. Excitedly, he asked, *לאימת אתי מר*, "Master, when are you coming to redeem the world?"

"*Hayom*, Today...!" he replied, with a glint in his eye. Rebbe Yehoshua was overcome

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with ecstasy; the long awaited breakthrough to *geulah* was about to occur! Full of energy, he returned to the Holy Land and waited.

The following day, Rebbe Yehoshua returned to Eliyahu HaNavi at the Cave of Rashbi with a complaint: שקורי קא שקר בי, "He lied to me! Moshiach said he was coming 'today', but he didn't!"

Eliyahu HaNavi nodded and patiently explained, הכי אמר לך, "Actually, this is what he said to you: *"Hayom, today — במקולו תשמעו* אם *"if only you will listen to His voice"* (Tehillim, 95:7).

If only...

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*Shabbos Chazon* the 'Shabbos of Vision' is named after the first word of the *haftarah* that we read on the Shabbos preceding the Fast of Tisha b'Av, the 9th of Av. The students of the Baal Shem Tov describe this Shabbos as a unique opportunity to glimpse a vision of what the world will look like after Redemption. Amazingly, this year Shabbos Chazon and Tisha b'Av are on the same day. Since the mitzvah of joy and *oneg* on Shabbos pushes off mourning, fasting and sadness, we will delay the fast until Sunday the 10th of Av, and we will eat and drink, rejoice and delight, and enjoy a vision of *geulah* on the 9th.

In this way, as we are feasting on Tisha

b'Av, we will not merely 'visualize' but we will have a palpable taste of the fulfillment of prophecy at the of end of days:

כֹּה־אָמַר ה' צְבָאֵהוּ-צוּם הַרְבִּיעִי וְצוּם הַחֲמִישִׁי... ה' לְבִית־יְהוּדָה לְשֹׁשׁוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה וּלְמַעֲדִים טוֹבִים..."

"So said the Lord of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month (Tamuz) and the fast of the fifth month (Av)... shall be for the House of Judah joy and happiness and happy festivals..." (Zecharya, 8:19)

This Shabbos is an *eis ratzon*, opportune time to feel and internalize the lesson we learn from Rebbe Yehoshua's encounter with Eliyahu haNavi. We speak so much of 'waiting for Moshiach'. In reality, Moshiach is waiting for us. Moshiach is ready at the gates, just waiting to be noticed, and just hoping to get the go-ahead: 'If only my people will listen to the Voice of the Divine — in the Torah, in their every experience, and in the needy characters on their city streets.

This Shabbos Chazon, may our hearts, eyes, ears and attention be open. And may it really be *today*.

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קול צפיקר נשאיו קול יחדיו ירננו כי עין בעין יראה בשוב ה' ציון:  
Your watchmen raise their voices  
As one, together they shout for joy  
For every eye shall behold Hashem's return to Zion. (Yeshayahu, 52:8) ■

## SHIUR SPONSORS

**Wednesday, August 3** - Rabbi Kimche's shiur was sponsored in loving memory of **Asna bat Reb Shneur z'l**.

She epitomized ahavat chinam. Loved and missed by her daughters - Shelley Hirshberg & Helen Raff, and all the family - on her 18th yahrzeit, 8 Menachem Av

**Tuesday, August 9** - Rabbi Yossie Goldin's Shiur is sponsored by **Simone Pierce** in loving memory of her Mother,

**Semcha Andree (Zeitoun) bat Jules & Irene a"h** on the 18th yahrzeit. She had a difficult life but never lost faith and kept the mitzvot. Her Mother taught "Do it for the Mitzvot"

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