

# The Shul

at the Lubavitch Center

6701 Old Pimlico Road

Baltimore, MD 21209

[www.chabadshul.org](http://www.chabadshul.org)



November 23, 2024

Chayei Sarah

22 Cheshvan, 5785

## Hurricanes and Earthquakes

Natural disasters, by their nature, raise the question of Divine Providence. How can G-d let this happen? How can so many innocent lives be lost?

When we see a person or a group of people committing great evil, it appears we can understand how it happens: human beings have free choice, and that person chose to do something evil. The punishment, well, G-d will see to that.

But hurricanes, earthquakes - the flooding of homes, the dispersal of people, the cost psychologically, financially, to say nothing of physical hardship, pain, suffering and death - where is the Divine Justice in that?

Some so-called "modern" thinkers have posited that either G-d is not All-Knowing, or He is not All-Powerful, or He is not All-Just (and by definition of "just," All-Merciful). In other words, Divine Omniscience, Divine Omnipotence and Divine Justice cannot all be true and operative. Two of the three, maybe, but not all three.

I say "modern" because this is an old question in theodicy, the study of Divine Justice. It's one, if not the, central subject of the book of Job. And it's no coincidence that G-d answers Job out of the whirlwind. Maimonides in his Guide for the Perplexed analyzes at length the concepts in the book of Job.

So the question really does not disprove the assertion that G-d is simultaneously Omniscient, Omnipotent and Just. (Indeed, is that not the definition of G-d?) All the question does is raise itself: confronted with the unknowable or the unanswerable, how do we respond? How should we respond?

In other words, one can reject the very basis for belief in G-d. Many so-called "rationalists" or "modernists" do. Or one can accept the limitations of the human mind and human intellect.

When we put on a philosopher's hat or a theologian's coat, we can enter the world of paradoxes and debates. But we must always bear in mind the statement of sage Rabbi Yannai that "we are unable to understand either the well-being of the wicked or the tribulations of the righteous." When it comes to the true, inner, spiritual reality, what you see outwardly is not necessarily what you get.

Nevertheless, the question remains - if we can't understand the WHY of a natural disaster, how are we to respond? For that, there is an answer. When confronted with tragedy, with the suffering of another, our task is not to understand the Divine reasons or judge the moral and spiritual value of the sufferer. Our Divinely ordained task is to increase in acts of goodness and kindness. Our focus must be on deeds that civilize, correct, heal, restore and improve.

If a hundreds-year old bridge is washed away, if a library is flooded, if a family is dispersed, if an individual needs medical care, if a child needs counseling - our task is to do, to get it done, to make goodness and kindness happen, not because we're such wonderful people, though we may be, but because that's our job. And that includes fixing what can be fixed - preventive measures - and in both cases figuring out the cost afterwards.

Asking Why and How Much both divert us from the essential question: What is the next act of goodness and kindness that I can perform, the act that will transform the world?

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

## Hashem's Courtyard

In this week's Parashah, Avraham Avinu sends his servant to Charan to find a wife for Yitzchak. Avraham warns his servant (24:6), "Beware not to return my son to there." Midrash Rabbah teaches that Yitzchak was considered to be an Olah Temimah / a perfect sacrificial offering as a result of having been offered wholeheartedly at the Akeidah. Just as an Olah may not be removed from the Bet Hamikdash, so Yitzchak may not leave Eretz Yisrael.

*(continued on the other side)*

R' Nosson Yehuda Leib Mintzberg z"l (1943-2018; rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) writes: From this Midrash, which equates Yitzchak's leaving Eretz Yisrael with taking a Korban out of the Bet Hamikdash, we learn something about the Kedushah / holiness of Eretz Yisrael. Part of serving Hashem is stationing appropriate servants in His "House" and His "Courtyard." The Kohen Gadol, for example, is commanded (Vayikra 21: 12), "He shall not leave the Mikdash / Sanctuary." Likewise, it is Hashem's Will that His servants, the residents of Eretz Yisrael, not leave that Land ("Hashem's Courtyard") except under specific conditions, such as to perform a Mitzvah. But Yitzchak, who had the status of an Olah Temimah, could not leave even for such reasons.

On the level of Peshat, R' Mintzberg adds, there is another reason why Yitzchak could not leave Eretz Yisrael. He explains: Avraham began the process of acquiring Eretz Yisrael by traveling throughout the Land. Yitzchak continued the acquisition process, but in a different way—residing in and using the Land (see Bereishit 26:2, 12). If Yitzchak would appear to abandon the Land, it would undo his acquisition. On the other hand, by remaining in Eretz Yisrael through circumstances in which others might leave it—for example, during a famine (26: 1-2), Yitzchak strengthened his and his descendants' hold on the Land. (Ben Melech Al Ha'Torah)

(by Rabbi Shlomo Katz from Project Genesis at [www.torah.org](http://www.torah.org))

**Community Information of Interest**

**November 30: A New Century, but No Peace: The State of Israel & The Jewish People 2000–2004. Lecture by Rabbi Dovid Katz.** *Waging War Against Terrorism - The Era of George W. Bush.* This lecture will begin at 8:00 p.m. and be held at the Congregation Shomrei Emunah.

**Kol Hanaarim— Father and Son Learning – is cancelled this week. The program will resume next week.**



**'The Rav's Friday Night Hashkafa Q&A Shiur for Men'**

will take place **this Friday night – November 22<sup>nd</sup>**  
at 8:00 p.m. and will be held at  
the home of **Mr. Zvi & Mrs. Avital Friedman,**  
at 6715 Old Pimlico Road.

**SHUL DIRECTORY**

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**DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE**

**Friday, 11/22 – 21 Cheshvan**

Shacharit —7:00 a.m.  
Candles — 4:28 p.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.

**Shabbat, 11/23 – 22 Cheshvan**

Shacharit – 9:00 a.m.  
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:24 a.m.  
Minchah — 4:15 p.m.  
Shiur — after Minchah  
Shkiah — 4:46 p.m.  
Ma'ariv — 5:29 p.m.

**Sunday, 11/24 – 23 Cheshvan**

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.  
Minchah / Maariv — 4:30 p.m.

**Monday, 11/25 – 24 Cheshvan**

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, 11/26 – 25 Cheshvan**

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m..  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, 11/27 – 26 Cheshvan**

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.  
Tanya Shiur: 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Tanya Shaar HaYichud  
V'Emunah which deals w/the nature of creation and  
the unity of Hashem — 8:00 p.m.

**Thursday – Thanksgiving, 11/28 – 27 Cheshvan**

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.

**Friday, 11/29 – 28 Cheshvan**

Shacharit —7:00 a.m.  
Candles — 4:26 p.m.  
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:25 p.m.