

BH

Sermon delivered by Rabbi Shalom M. Paltiel

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JUDAISM – AN ARCHEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

Rabbi who meets a couple... "We weren't blessed with any children yet." "Let me write down your names and place a note in the WALL for a blessing." Five years later he meets the women and asks:

"So how are things?"

"Well rabbi, we were blessed with 10 children; two sets of twins and two sets of triplets."

"Amazing! I would like to congratulate your husband. Where is he?"

"He is in Israel." She replies

"What is he doing there?"

"Looking for that note you placed in the Wall."

Guy who prays at the Kotel every day for 30 years consecutively is being interviewed by Fox News:

FOX: Is it true you are here praying every single day, for 30 years?

Man: Yes, it's true

FOX: What do you pray for?

Man: World peace

FOX: After all these years, what does it feel like?

Man: I feel like I'm talking to the wall!!!

People's most favorite part of trip to Israel – tunnels under the Wall – excavations

We're fascinated by the excavations, the tunnels, they reveal so much not seen on the surface

Visible Western Wall is approximately 200 ft long,

Majority of its original length is hidden underground.

The tunnel allows access to an additional 1,600 ft!!!

See 4000 years of history of our people etched in stone dating back to Abraham

They've uncovered civilizations from Byzantine times – 1500 years ago

2nd Temple era – 2000 years ago

1st Temple era – close to 3000 years ago

You see tradition come alive

Every civilization had a Mikvah, a synagogue, you see the City of David

In June - a big discovery of a system of pools providing water to the Temple Mount

For 150 years archeologists have been interested in digging

But there was opposition... so long as the Arabs controlled the Old City they forbade any excavation.

From 1948 to 1967 Jordan ruled Old City of Jerusalem, no Jew could live there or even approach the wall, certainly no excavations were taking place

In 1967 war, Jordan joined a war that wasn't theirs... G-d perhaps hardened King Hussein's heart to get involved and he attacked Israel. Unplanned, Israel conquered the Old City and Jewish people were reunited with Kotel

Famous photos of soldiers coming to the wall crying, religious and secular alike celebrating their home coming. What a beautiful sight!

R' Shlomo Goren, chief chaplain of the IDF, blowing the Shofar

The crackling sound on Israeli radio by IDF General Motta Gur:

"Har Habayit B'yodeinu. The Temple Mount is in our hands. I repeat: The Temple Mount is in our hands." (Ani chozer – har habayit b'yodeinu...)

The moral of the story:

You gotta excavate.

In Judaism - you gotta dig down to know what's really going on!

In Judiasm - like the Kotel, what you see on the surface is just the tip of the iceberg

Dig down a little bit, take time to study and explore

Come and study!

“But rabbi I know what it’s all about... we did Shabbat in our home. I do the holidays... I even have a fantastic recipe on matzah balls... I get it...”

Wonderful. But there’s so much more. Start exploring. Studying.

People are shocked when they take tour of Chabad House, when they turn the corner... “I never realized how big this place is... I’ve been passing this place for years... From the outside it looks much smaller...”

Explore – learn – dig a bit deeper

You’ll find out this Judaism you’ve been “passing by” for years is a whole new Judaism. You’ll turn a corner and say WOW! I didn’t realize this is so big!

3000 years of knowledge

A fascinating, complex legal system as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago

(Ask students who attended our JLI: MONEY MATTERS course)

Ethics and morality

Self help (that really works... and doesn’t cost a fortune in therapy...)

Emotional and practical guidance to a balanced life

And an entire system of spirituality and mysticism

You want to get to know JUDAISM? YOU GOT TO DIG DOWN.

And what's true about Judaism is also true about the individual Jew:

You want to get to know a JEW – you got to dig down

If you can't judge JUDAISM by the surface... you can't judge a JEW by the surface

MOTTEL THE SINNER:

Mottel was the town sinner, smoked outside shul on shabbos, ate his non-kosher sandwich publicly on Yom Kippur, everyone in town was devout and Mottel was different.

Until the Nazis came. Now he was just like everyone else...

All Jews herded into the shul, told by the Nazis to unravel torahs on floor to march on them.

As they're lining up - Mottel suddenly pushes himself to the front of the line – and when the nazi says “march”, he looks him in the eye and says: “We Jews don't march on our torah. We don't step on our torah.” And he's the first to be shot at point blank range...

How do you explain that? How do you reconcile that?

In heart of Jew – dig down – you'll find the pintele yid, the Jewish spark – within everyone without exception

Story of Arik Sharon approaching the KOTEL for the first time after 1967. He's approached by a Chabad'nik to put on tefillin. He does so and then begins to cry. When asked by press why this rough and tough Arik as he is affectionately known, a Major General in the IDF, conquerer of Sinai, who's seen it all... the quintessential Sabra, secular Israeli, suddenly softens up like this? Is this true?

The self confident Sharon became a bit shy and replied: "Yes, it's true. I did just that"

"I'm not a "yehudi dati" – but you know like every Jew deep down I have a "yehudi dati" – a religious Jew...

"I came to the Wall. I had very deep feelings that I wanted to express. But I realized that: "Layhudi hadati sheli ein milim" – "my religious Jew inside has no words... So I put on tefillin, and I cried..."

So JUDAISM demands excavation – in order to see some of the depth of Judaism, and some of the depths within the Jew...

The same message carries along to Jewish continuity –an all important topic:

A woman was working in the kitchen when she heard her 6-year old son call for her.

"Mummy, Mummy!" he called. "Do you know that beautiful vase in the dining room that's been handed down from generation to generation?"

"Yes", she said. "What about it?"

"Well, the last generation just dropped it."

I mentioned that when Jerusalem was controlled by the Arabs they didn't allow excavations. Why?

They understood – excavation reveals a city's past.

Excavation will reveal that Jerusalem has been the capital of the Jewish homeland for 3000 years!

And if it's been the capital of the Jewish homeland for 3000 years – what do you think it is today: The capital of the Jewish homeland!

Digging down into its past – is the most powerful statement about the present.

Friends – apply the same thought process to yourself.

Whether we say YISKOR personally or not – there's a powerful message in it – pivotal to our approach to who we are as Jews:

YISKOR means to remember. To remember the past, our parents, our grandparents, and their parents and grandparents.

YISKOR IS AN ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG!

You know the true identity of a city by digging down into its past -

You know the true identity of a Jew by digging into his past

People are so obsessed with Ancestry.com – it's the hottest thing. Why?

Because my past is really WHO I AM!

You think of yourself as an American Jew – not really too involved...

H2O Jew = two holidays only...

Dear friend – dig down a little bit... excavate – not 2000 years, just 2 or 3 generations

Your zeideh was a chazzan or a rabbi

Your bubbeh cried each time she lit her Shabbat candles, she koshered her own chickens

I recently visited a wealthy Jew here in Sands Point for the purposes of fundraising. I was told he is a good man with a good Jewish heart. When I went to meet him, I wondered if he had any heart at all – let alone a warm one...

He almost didn't let me into the house... We stood near the door:

"Rabbi, I'm not sure why you're here. You and I have nothing in common. You're about the past, I'm about the future. You're busy with traditions, I've educated my children to move forward into modernity. Besides, you probably consider me a "goy" to begin with, so why am I even talking to you?!"

I begin to explain the Chabad approach as taught by the Rebbe, Rabbi Schneerson of righteous memory. I explained that the Rebbe taught us how to view the Jews we reach out to with our message of Judaism. "Don't look down upon them. Don't think you are better than them. They might very well be better than you. You come from Yeshiva background, so of course you do tefillin and pray three times each day. What else should you do?... They come from modern American life in suburbia. When a Jew like that does even one small mitzvah, tefillin, Shabbat candles, whatever, G-D GETS OUT OF HIS CHAIR!!!

I explained to the man, what I told you last year in a sermon that G-d treasures mitzvahs that come from "11050". He's got tons from "11213 and 11225". When a prayer or sukkah comes from these, he has it filed away. But when he gets a LULAV shaken or sukkah put up in 11050 – He asks to have it brought right in to His royal chambers! When He learns about a Shabbat dinner table in 11030 – He's right there at the table tasting some of the wine!

By now my host has warmed up a tad... He brings me into his study. As I enter I notice large photographs of CHASIDS on the wall...I'm shocked!

Now – he suddenly melts away... He explains to me exactly whose who in the pictures... His zeideh Moshe who used to walk him to SHUL in the lower East Side, his bubbeh Masha who had the best blintz recipe, his uncles, etc...

Now, with tears in his eyes he begins to give me the dissertation: “Rabbi, my zeideh Moshe was so religious, compared to him... YOU’RE a goy!”

“Every year at the seder I have these photographs on our Seder table. I want my children to see who we are. They’re successful professionals and are living the American Dream, and I’m proud of them for it. But they need to know who they are. I tell them: This is where we come from. This is who we are...”!

After holocaust there arrives in Israel a ship filled with hundreds of orphans, from Ukraine, brought to the port at Haifa.

A young 8 year old girl named Tziporah, who had seen her father killed right in front of her eyes, disembarks. After long journey to Israel she’s brought to the absorption center in Petach Tikvah.

A pleasant man from the kibbutz where she will be assigned smiles and gives her a gift: A wristwatch and a doll. She never owned a watch, and hasn’t held a doll since before the war... She clutches the doll to her bosom...

“You will come with me and everything will be ok” he says

“Where will you be taking me”

“To a place where there’ll be many children just like you. Everything will be ok”

But something bothered little Tziporah, she couldn’t quite put her finger on it...

She asks: “Where you’ll be taking me, on Friday night, do they go like this?” – making motion for lighting the Shabbat candles...

“No, that was in the old world. My dear child, don’t think about the ancient past anymore. This is a new place now.”

Without a moments’ hesitation, Tziporah separated the doll from her bosom and removed the watch from her wrist: “Here, take these back. I can’t take them because I can’t go with you...”

The man, stunned at the boldness: “No, it’s ok, please have them...”

“No, I can’t take them... they mean that I’m throwing away where I come from. I can’t go with you... that’s not where I belong... So please take these back.”

The man took the doll and watch, his heart broken in a million little pieces...

“*Aizeh am anachnu...* What a people we are” he muttered. Still overcome with emotion, remembering his own mother making those motions, he walked Tziporah over to the officials at the desk and had her assigned to a torah observant kibutz.

Tziporah Adler now lives in Queens with large family of children, grandchildren and great grand children... including a bunch of little meidalach who go like this....

Where we come from says a lot about who we are...

A young woman wrote to the Rebbe, Rabbi Schneerson, with a problem she was experiencing. The Rebbe gave advice and a blessing. He also counseled her to begin observing more of her heritage. She wrote: But I’m not from a religious background.

Answered the Rebbe - and I quote: “You write that you come from a secular background.

It is surely known to you that this background extends back only one, two or three generations at most, and that preceding that is a background of tens of generations of Jews who observed Judaism and its precepts, sometimes even sacrificing their lives for it.”

Example.... Hmmmm.

Derek Jeter is pretty good player... but he can get into a slump...

What does he say to himself at that time: I'm no good, I can't hit?

Or he says: Jeter – you're awesome... you're one of 28 players in major league history to hit 3000 hits... It's a slump... It's not indicative of who you are...

If you're a Jew today sitting in a shul, it's because for 150 generations of your ancestry they were all dedicated to Jewish-ness in their daily lives.

You've got a pretty good hitting streak...

You're batting 1000

2 or 3 generations were a bit soft? Big deal! It's a slump...

You're still a superstar!

GET IN THE GAME!

Dear friends,

Let this be a year of excavation for each of us

When we dig a bit deeper

Within ourselves, within our traditions, within our past...

You know what our pick and shovel are? Knowledge...

We each need some time for Torah study to explore more of who we are, what we're about and where we come from...

Never in history has there been more opportunity for Torah study at our fingertips

There are classes and courses given right here at Chabad

The Jewish Learning Institute course

THOSE WHO HAVE ATTENDED JLI CLASS HERE – OR OTHER ONGOING CLASSES WITH MYSELF, RABBI WEINBERG, SARA, DEVORAH

PLEASE RISE...

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE GOT YOUR PICK AND SHOVEL IN HAND, AND YOU'RE DIGGING

KEEP DIGGING – SOONER OR LATER, I PROMISE

YOU'LL COME UPON TREASURES...

Ongoing Torah classes...

Or go on line – chabad.org – you can watch video classes on a whole host of topics; or for the more advanced - theyeshiva.net; (see: torahcafe.com)

Or grab a book, a Torah book

And not just a Jewish book... “My name is Asher Lev...” Real TORAH TEXTS! The Bible with Commentary, Talmud, mishnah, Jewish law, Chassidic philosophy...

And let's hold on to that vase – it's priceless...

Har habayit byodeinu – the Temple Mount - it's in our hands... I repeat, the KOTEL, our 3000 year old precious vase

It's in our hands.

It's in our TRUSTED hands!

Let's make sure to keep *yiddishkeit* alive in our homes and in our lives...

Let's make sure that our children and grandchildren will continue to “go like that” (Shabbat candles)

We want Al-Mighty G-d to fill our homes and our lives with LIGHT and BLESSINGS?

Make sure every Friday night to “go like that”

(Turning to men): Let's make sure to “go like that” (tefillin)

And “like that” (kissing mezuzah motion)...

May our beloved Father in Heaven

“go like that” – (hand motion outwards)

and fill each of our lives with light, joy, warmth

good health, happiness, prosperity

most of all –

The blessing of SHALOM – Peace

Peace in the world and in Israel

Peace in our homes

Peace in our families

Most of all – true inner Peace...

peace of mind and heart!

SHANA TOVA!