



כולל רבנים
רבינו צבי אשכנזי

An Initiative of Amsterdam Community Kollel

THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

20 Tammuz

- Jews of Telz, including the heads of the yeshiva, were killed by the Nazis, 1941.
- Nazis destroyed the Kovno ghetto, 1944.
- Yahrzeit of Rabbi Betzalel Rakow, Rav of Gateshead, 2003

21 Tammuz

- Jews were barred from settling in Brazil, 1567.

22 Tammuz

- Marranos were permitted to leave Portugal, 1557.

23 Tammuz

- Crusaders captured Jerusalem, 1099.
- Chmielnicki hordes attack Vilna, 1655, killing many Jews.
- Yahrzeit of Rabbi Moshe Cordevero, author of Tomer Devora, 1570.

24 Tammuz

- Crusaders gathered the Jews of Jerusalem into a shul and set it aflame, 1099. All perished in the fire. Jews were barred from the city for the following 88 years.

25 Tammuz

- Jews of Lithuania received a Charter of Privilege, guaranteeing their safety, 1388.

26 Tammuz

- Yahrzeit of Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried, author of Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (and other works), 1886.

THE FINAL TEST

Based on an insight of Rabbi Yosef Salant, a descendant of the renowned Rabbi Shmuel Salant, the legendary Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem.

Hashem commanded Moshe, "Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites; afterward you shall be gathered to your people" (Numbers 31:2). Why did Hashem make Moshe's passing dependent upon the war with Midian? At first glance, the two events seem unrelated. Why should Moshe's death hinge upon this particular battle?

Rabbi Yosef Salant offers a profound explanation. Moshe's death was not actually caused by the war with Midian, nor was it because his life's mission had come to an end. The true reason was the Divine decree that Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael. As long as the Jewish people remained in the wilderness, Moshe could continue to live and lead them. However, the moment they became spiritually worthy of entering the Land, the decree took effect. Moshe could not accompany them into Eretz Yisrael and therefore had to leave this world.

Why, then, was the war with Midian the turning point? Midian had been responsible for leading Israel into the tragic sin of Baal Peor through idolatry and immorality. Before entering a land surrounded by idolatrous nations, Israel first had to demonstrate that they had overcome the spiritual influence of idolatry. Their victory over Midian was therefore far more than a military triumph. It was proof that they had conquered the very temptation that had once conquered them.

The greatest victory is not when you defeat your enemy, but when your enemy no longer has the power to defeat you. Israel's triumph over Midian demonstrated that idolatry no longer ruled their hearts. Having overcome that spiritual challenge, they were now worthy to enter Eretz Yisrael. At that moment, the decree that Moshe could not enter the Land took effect, and therefore Hashem said, "Afterward you shall be gathered to your people." Perhaps this episode also teaches us something profound about Moshe himself. Although this was not Rabbi Yosef Salant's primary point, the Torah reveals Moshe's extraordinary selflessness. Moshe understood that once Israel proved worthy of entering the Land, his own passing would inevitably follow. Yet he did not hesitate for even a moment to fulfill Hashem's command. He had devoted his entire life to preparing Klal Yisrael for this very moment—to become spiritually strong enough to resist idolatry and enter the Holy Land. He was prepared to surrender his own life so that God's people could fulfill their destiny.

May we learn from Moshe Rabbeinu that our greatest achievements are not measured by what we accomplish for ourselves, but by how faithfully we help others reach the destiny that Hashem has prepared for them. When a person's life's ambition becomes the fulfillment of Hashem's purpose, all personal ambitions are elevated and united with that single goal. As Moshe Rabbeinu demonstrated, when our will becomes one with the will of Hashem, we ultimately accomplish far more than we ever could by pursuing our own success.