BS"D

To: parsha@parsha.net
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **V'ZOS HABRACHA** - 5778

In our 23nd year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to http://www.parsha.net and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha-subscribe@yahoogroups.com Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at http://www.parsha.net It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored anonymously in memory of
Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov

To sponsor a parsha sheet (proceeds to tzedaka) contact cshulman@parsha.net

---

DO NOT FORGET TO MAKE AN ERUV TAVSHILIN

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

V'ZOT HABRACHA

As is usual and customary, the reading of the Torah concludes and is resumed again in an almost simultaneous fashion on the day of Simchat Torah. This juxtaposition of the readings is especially noticeable this year with the immediacy of Shabbat Bereshiith to Simchat Torah itself.

The Torah concludes with the lesson of the mortality and the eternity of the human being. The Torah itself finishes with the mortality of Moshe but it is a physical mortality. There is no greater testimony to the eternity of the human spirit than the Torah that Moshe bequeathed to us and to the world at large. And this is also the lesson taught to us by the opening narrative regarding the creation and development of human beings.

The Torah tells us that we humans were and are invested with eternity, blown into our nostrils by God, so to speak, and endowed with enormous and gifted talents. But with all of this, our own mortality and the constant reminder of its fragile state of being would always limit us. Humans are aware almost from the time of their birth of their mortality.

Paradoxically, it is this very knowledge of our temporary status on earth that provides the fuel and the energy that drives the engines of human creativity and civilization. We are always in a hurry for we are aware that passing time is our mortal enemy. Both the end and the beginning of the Torah come to reinforce this message of the duality of human beings – eternal and temporary at one and the same time.

The Torah concludes with the blessings of Moshe to his beloved people, the children of Israel. Those blessings are very detailed, individual and personal. The Torah begins with God's blessings to the human race, which are general and universal in nature. This teaches us that although all humans are basically alike and desire health, material success, family and community, comfort and security, each human being is particular, differently talented and motivated in his or her own private world.

Judaism recognizes and reconciles this community and individuality, which is the basic cause of human tension and internal angst. Moshe taught us that we are to treasure our uniqueness as individuals and as a people. God, so to speak, taught us that each of us is part of a universal brotherhood, fashioned from the same mold, by the same Creator.

Seeing ourselves as being recipients of this gift of social and spiritual duality of identity and purpose is one of the main requirements of living a truly Jewish Torah life. That is why we treat the Torah readings as a seamless whole, really without beginning and end. It all flows together in the paradoxical condition of the human soul and its eternal search for a fairer society and a better world. The continuing, never ending cycle of the Torah itself is our greatest comfort.

Chag Sameach
Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

---

from: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb.org
date: Tue, Oct 10, 2017 at 7:19 PM
subject: Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg - Shemini Atzeres - Living in Hashem's Presence

Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg
Shemini Atzeres - Living in Hashem's Presence

Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah are the conclusion of the yom tov season which begins with Rosh Hashana. How are these days an appropriate finale to the yomim noraim? The tefillos of Rosh Hashana focus on expressing our desire that Hakadosh Boruch Hu's kingship over the world should be recognized by all. The beracha of kedushas hayom begins, "Rule over the entire world in your glory...let everything created by You know that You are its Maker." Even on Yom Kippur, the theme of kabolas malchus shamayim, accepting Hashem's kingship and praying for the day that all should recognize Hashem's strength and power, remains a primary motif. And yet, the main focus of Yom Kippur is teshuva. Why is discussing malchus shamayim so important in the process of teshuva?

The answer is that sin is possible only when a person forgets that he is constantly in the presence of the Ribbono Shel Olam. Our tefillos express a desire that all people should recognize Hashem's kingship, and included in that request is that we ourselves should constantly live with an awareness of Hashem's presence, that we should evaluate all of our actions through the prism of the Torah, and that our goal should be not to satisfy our own desires but to carry out Hashem's agenda for ourselves and for the world at large. Dedicating ourselves to malchus shamayim is not extraneous to the teshuva process at all, but rather it is a prerequisite for teshuva.

On Shemini Atzeres, our allegiance to Hashem and His Torah reaches its pinnacle. We leave the sukka and put down the daled minim. We have no special mitzvos on this yom tov. Rather, our sole focus is celebrating with Hashem and His Torah. The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Pinchas, 782) comments that on Shemini Atzeres, the Jewish people declare, "Zeh hayom asah Hashem, nagilah v'nismecha bo - This is the day that Hashem made, we will rejoice and be happy bo." Asks the Midrash, "What does bo mean - 'with it' (meaning the yom tov of Shemini Atzeres) or 'with Him' (meaning Hashem)? Comes the posuk and explains, 'Nagilah v'nismecha bach (Shir Hashirim 1:4)' - bach b'Torascha, bach biyeshuascha - with You in your Torah, with You in your salvation."

Shemini Atzeres is the day we declare that ultimate happiness can be felt only when a person connects to Hakadosh Boruch Hu and His Torah, when one recognizes that his strength and his success come only from Hashem. On Simchas Torah, we circle around the Torah to demonstrate that we want to subordinate ourselves to the spirit of the Torah and to live by the dictates and agenda of the Torah. Our exuberance and joy when dancing with the Torah is an expression of our heartfelt desire to take with us the tefilla of the

yomim noraim that Hashem's kingship should be recognized by all, including ourselves.

The message of Shemini Atzeres is an appropriate prelude to **Parshas Bereishis**. The posuk says that when Hashem created Adam HaRishon, He declared, "Let us make man in our image, in our form" (Bereishis 1:26.) Rashi comments that although the angels did not assist Hakadosh Boruch Hu in the creation of man, nevertheless the Torah uses the plural verb na'aseh in order to teach the trait of humility by implying that Hashem consulted with the angels, even though by doing so, the Torah makes it easier for heretics to claim that multiple gods were involved in the process of man's creation.

The question is why is it worth taking the risk that someone might err in his beliefs just to teach a proper character trait? Rav Chaim Friedlander (Sifsei Chaim, Moadim 1, pp. 185-186) suggests that the Torah goes out of its way to teach the importance of humility because specifically this middahcan prevent a person from making a mistake in his beliefs in the first place. If a person humbles himself and accepts malchus shamayim, he will not make a mistake in hashkafa. As the posuk says, "And you will become haughty, and you will forget Hashem" (Eikev, 8:14.) Having the proper perspective on life is often not a function of a person's intelligence, but rather of his middos. If a person develops a sense of humility, that will prevent him from making a mistake in his beliefs.

The truth is that all negative character traits stem from the same basic source, and that is a person's drive for self-satisfaction. The Rambam writes (Hilchos Teshuva 7:3) that one is obligated to do teshuva not only for improper actions, but even for inappropriate character traits like anger, jealousy, competition, and chasing after money, honor and physical pleasure. Why is this a part of teshuva? The answer is that improper character traits can lead a person to sin because if a person is focused on satisfying himself, he will not be able to exercise self-control. To do a complete teshuva, it is not enough to regret the actions a person has done. He must also uproot the negative attitudes and middos which caused his aveiros, because without doing so, his teshuva will only be temporary.

The first two aveiros recorded by the Torah are the sin of eating from the eitz ha'da'as and the killing of Hevel. Each one of these was caused not by a heretical belief, but by an improper middah. Chava ate from the eitz ha'da'as because the tree, "was a delight to the eyes and it was desirable as a means for wisdom." Chava wanted, "to be like G-d knowing good and bad," and she did not control herself. Similarly, after Hevel's korban is accepted and Kayin's is rejected, Kayin kills Hevel. Once again, it was Kayin's jealousy, not a heretical belief, which caused him to kill his brother. These two sins highlight the insight of the Rambam that to do a complete teshuva, a person must uproot his negative character traits because often a person's middos determine how he thinks and acts.

What can motivate a person to want to change his middos? A sincere desire to sacrifice his own interests for the sake of kvod shamayim, to subordinate his own will to that of Hakadosh Boruch Hu. That is the message of the yomim noraim and Shemini Atzeres - to search for happiness not in the pursuit of physical pleasure and personal satisfaction, but in accepting malchus shamayim and fulfilling the will of Hashem. Nagilah v'nismecha bach. May we rejoice and find happiness in our connection to Hakadosh Boruch Hu because that is the ultimate delight.

More divrei Torah from Rabbi Koenigsberg

More divrei Torah on Sukkos

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Shabbat Shalom shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU

www.ou.org/torah/parsha/rabbi-sacks-on-parsha

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Covenant & Conversation

Judaism's Life-Changing Ideas

What is Judaism? A religion? A faith? A way of life? A set of beliefs? A collection of commands? A culture? A civilisation? It is all these, but it is emphatically something more.

It is a way of thinking, a constellation of ideas: a way of understanding the world and our place within it. Judaism contains life-changing ideas. That is what I want to talk about in Covenant and Conversation, 5778.

Too few people think about faith in these terms. We know the Torah contains commands, 613 of them. We know that Judaism has beliefs. Maimonides formulated them as the 13 principles of Jewish faith. But these are not all that Judaism is, nor are they what is most distinctive about it. Judaism was and remains a dazzlingly original way of thinking about life.

Take one of my favourite examples: the American Declaration of Independence (1776), and its most important sentence: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This is arguably the most important sentence in the history of modern politics. It was what Abraham Lincoln was referring to in the opening of the Gettysburg Address when he said: "Four-score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

The irony of this sentence, as I have often noted, is that "these truths" are very far indeed from being "self-evident." They would have sounded absurd to Plato and Aristotle, both of whom believed that not all men are created equal and therefore they do not have equal rights. They were only self-evident to someone brought up in a culture that had deeply internalised the Hebrew Bible and the revolutionary idea set out in its first chapter, that we are each, regardless of colour, culture, class or creed, in the image and likeness of God. This was one of Judaism's world-changing ideas.

We also see from this example that you can have an idea, formulate it in words, and declare it to the world, but you may still struggle to internalise it and you may have to fight to make it real. Thomas Jefferson, who drafted the Declaration of Independence, was a slave owner. Evidently he did not include black people or slaves in his phrase "all men." Eighty-seven years later, when Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address, America was fighting a civil war over just this issue.

However long it takes, though, ideas change the world. Some do so by leading to inventions. Think of some of the great ideas of recent times: the computer, the Internet, search engines, social networking software and smartphones. They all had to be thought before they could be made. As we say (talking about Shabbat and Creation): sof maaseh, bemachshavah techila, which roughly means, first you have to have the thought; only then can you do the deed that turns the idea into reality. Shabbat itself, incidentally, is another one of Judaism's world-changing ideas.

But sometimes ideas change the world because they change us. It's these ideas I want to explore this year, through the weekly parsha.

Ideas that Changed My Life

My own life has been changed by ideas, not always exclusively Jewish ones but ideas none the less. Here are three examples.

More than twenty years ago I started an organisation, Jewish Continuity, whose aim was to transform the Jewish community by intensifying education at all levels and ages. It was successful, but it proved to be intensely controversial. The lay leader of the organisation, Dr Michael Sinclair, was an extraordinary man who poured his money, energy and time into the project, and was always thinking outside the box. At the height of the controversy I invited him to meet the rabbis of our community, so that they could express some of their concerns. The meeting did not go well. The rabbis were very candid but throughout it all, Dr Sinclair stayed beatifically calm. When the session was over I walked with him to his car, and apologised for the way he had been treated. He smiled at me, told me not to worry, and said, "That was a character-forming experience."

For me, at that moment, the impact of his response was electrifying, and it changed my life. Here was a man who had voluntarily given so much to our community, and all he had received in return was criticism. It reminded me of the famous remark, "No good deed goes unpunished." Throughout it all, though, he had remained serene because he had been able to step back from the immediacy of the moment, reframe it as an ordeal he had to go through to reach his destination, and one that would ultimately make him stronger. Ever since, whenever I faced controversy or crisis, I said to myself, "That was a character-forming experience." And because I thought it, it was.

The second example: like all too many people nowadays I have problems sleeping. I suffer from insomnia. I once mentioned this to my teacher, Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch. His immediate response was: could I teach him how to have insomnia? He would love, he told me, to be able not to sleep, and quoted to me the rabbinic dictum, "Moonlight was made only for the purpose of study" (Eruvin 65a). What I saw as an affliction, he saw as an opportunity. By sleeping less, I could study more. It did not stop me suffering from sleeplessness (though I found it helped me relate better to the line from Psalms, "The guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps"), but it did allow me to reframe it. I was able better to use the sleepless hours.

For me, the most personally transformative of all beliefs has been the idea of hashgachah peratit, Divine providence. Whenever something unexpected has happened in my life, I have always asked, "What is Heaven trying to tell me? How does it want me to respond? Given that this has happened, how shall I turn this moment into a blessing?" I learned this through my early encounters with Chabad and with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I learned it a second time, from a different starting point, through my study of the work of Viktor Frankl, the man who survived Auschwitz and turned his experiences there into a new form of psychotherapy based on what he called "man's search for meaning." His view was that we should never ask, "What do I want from life?" but always, "What does life want from me?" It was with surprise and delight that I discovered that the Rebbe was himself an admirer of Viktor Frankl's work. The result of that strong belief in providence, or as I sometimes put it, living-as-listening, has been to flood my life with meaning. For me, nothing just happens. It always comes with a call to respond in a particular kind of way.

Ideas change lives.

Jewish Ideas

Jews contributed to the world some of its most transformative ideas. It's worth listening to the testimony of non-Jewish writers on this subject. Here, for instance, is the Catholic historian Paul Johnson: "To the Jews we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual conscience and so of personal redemption; of the collective conscience and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind."

Another Catholic historian, Thomas Cahill, wrote this: "The Jews gave us the Outside and the Inside – our outlook and our inner life. We can hardly get up in the morning or cross the street without being Jewish. We dream Jewish dreams and hope Jewish hopes. Most of our best words, in fact – new, adventure, surprise; unique, individual, person, vocation; time, history, future; freedom, progress, spirit; faith, hope, justice – are the gifts of the Jews."

The late William Rees-Mogg, also a Catholic, once wrote that "One of the gifts of Jewish culture to Christianity is that it has taught Christians to think like Jews," adding, "Any modern man who has not learned to think as though he were a Jew can hardly be said to have learned to think at all."

Far and away the most fascinating judgment, though, comes from one of Judaism's sharpest critics, Friedrich Nietzsche:

Consider Jewish scholars in this light: all of them have a high regard for logic, that is for compelling agreement by force of reasons; they know with that they are bound to win, even where they encounter race and class prejudices … Incidentally, Europe owes the Jews no small thanks for making people think more logically and for establishing cleanlier intellectual habits – nobody more so than the Germans, who are a lamentably déraisonnable race who to this day are still in need of having their "heads washed" first. Wherever Jews have won influence they have taught men to make finer distinctions, more rigorous inferences, and to write in a more luminous and cleanly fashion; their task was ever to bring a people "to listen to raison."[1]

This is a remarkable tribute from what in British politics they call "the leader of the Opposition."

One might think that the ideas Judaism introduced into the world have become part of the common intellectual heritage of humankind, at least of the West, and that they are by now, as Jefferson said, "self-evident." Yet this is not the case. Some of them have been lost over time; others the West never fully understood. That is what I hope to explore in this year's studies, for two reasons.

The first was suggested by Nietzsche himself. He wanted the West to abandon the Judeo-Christian ethic in favour of what he called "the will to power." This was a disastrous mistake. There is nothing original in the will to power. It has existed since the days of Cain, and its price is perennial bloodshed. But Nietzsche was right in one respect: the great alternative is Judaism. The choice humankind faces in every age is between the idea of power and the power of ideas. Judaism has always believed in the power of ideas, and it remains the only non-violent way to change the world.

The second is neither political nor philosophical but personal. Some ideas really are life-changing. Each week I will try to introduce you to one from the parsha. If we change the way we think, we can change the way we feel, which changes the way we act, which changes the person we become. Ideas change lives, and great ideas help us to courage, to happiness and to lives filled with blessing.

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Ohr Torah Stone <ohrtorahstone@otsny.org>
reply-to: yishai@ots.org.il
subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

Shabbat Shalom: Simchat Torah 5778

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – "Remember the teaching of Moses, My servant, the laws and ordinances that I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel." [Malachi 3:23].

The truest essence of reality is not necessarily that which meets the eye; indeed, often times things and people are not what they appear to be. Even our most profound statement of faith, "Sh'ma Yisrael" [Deut. 6:4], is recited while covering one's eyes with one's hand, so that we not be distracted by the illusory nature of what we see around us. Indeed, Rashi's explanation of this verse – that we live in an incomplete and imperfect world in which God is not yet universally accepted – reinforces this point.

The world of God is the world of the inner dimension, the soul rather than the face of the human being, the inner reality rather than the mask for the outside world. In fact, the entire High Holy Day period, beginning with Rosh Hashana and culminating with Simchat Torah, is dedicated to the inner self and to the essential soul of things. The piercing sound of the shofar resonates with the inner cry of the human being; the liturgical poems remind us that the Almighty "searches the inner feelings of every human being;" and we express on this day our deepest fears as well as our innermost hopes.

On Yom Kippur, each of us stands before the Almighty bereft of our physical trappings and even minimal bodily comforts such as food and drink. It is our inner soul that stands before the Almighty ready to be purified.

In a similar vein, it may be said that the Jewish calendar establishes two celebrations for two aspects of the Torah – or, if you will, a separate celebration for each one of our two Torahs, represented by the two sets of tablets we received in the desert.

The festival of Shavuot (Weeks) marks the Revelation at Sinai when God first presented to us His Torah in the form of the first tablets. This was an external Torah, given amidst an "external extravaganza" of thunder and fire and sounds which were to be seen by the eye [Ex. 20:15].

In contrast, when Moses received the second set of tablets – on Yom Kippur – he did so this time in the midst of Divine silence and in the lonely splendor of intimacy with the Divine. The Sages teach that only the second tablets contained the Oral Law [Midrash, Shemot Rabba, 46:1], which is actually the innermost dimension of Torah that can only be heard and extracted by those who are privy to the inner voice of the Torah's secrets.

It is not by accident that the first tablets were broken, whereas the second are eternal and indestructible. It is not coincidental that forty days after the first Revelation, the People of Israel worshipped the golden calf, whereas the second Torah remains our eternal symbol of Divine love and forgiveness.

These two Torot, the outer and the inner, are expressed in the K'tiv and Kri of the Torah as we experience it. The K'tiv literally means the "writing", the black letters as they appear in the Torah Scroll; the Kri is the way our tradition mandates that we read those letters, sometimes in a different way than we would expect. One might say that the Ktiv is the external Torah and the Kri its internal counterpart. On Simchat Torah we celebrate the inner Torah, the Oral Torah, the "Kri".

On this closing day of the High Holiday period, we read of the death of Moses. Moses' life also has a "K'tiv" and "Kri", an external form and an internal essence.

On the one hand, we might conclude that Moses was a tragic personality: he began his life amidst the wealth and fame of Pharaoh's palace, a veritable prince in Egypt, but concluded it while wandering in the desert, without even a solid roof over his head. His goal had been to take the Israelites into the Promised Land, but at the crucial moment of truth, they failed to rise to the Divine challenge. Finally, after a series of quarrelsome rebellions and forty-two different temporary destinations, Moses departs from his people and the physical world without even a cemetery monument to mark his memory!

The truth, however, resides in the "Kri" of Moses' life, the internal essence that follows us and that we follow to this day. It was Moses who spoke to God face-to-face, as it were, and led the transformation of a slave nation into one with a relationship with the Divine. Even if Moses' words were not always heard by his own generation, his message reverberates throughout all the Jewish generations.

We celebrate the Torah even as we read of Moses' death because for us Moses never died; his grave is unmarked because through the words of the Torah that he communicated to us, he lives on. Moses in essence resides in his inner message, the Torah by which we live and from which we study is his eternal legacy. It is this Torah over which we rejoice on Simchat Torah.

Shabbat Shalom

---

from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com>
date: Thu, Feb 16, 2017 at 9:11 AM

Christopher Columbus, Secret Jew – AISH.COM

What is the evidence that Columbus was a Jew?

by Barbara Penn

On February 15, 1493, Christopher Columbus sent out a letter to the European world revealing for the first time his discovery of America. His finding was the first step into a new world, which would become the symbol of religious tolerance and freedom. The real identity of Christopher Columbus sheds new light on the poignancy of this historical period, especially for the Jews.

To gain a better understanding of Columbus's legacy, it's important to note the historical background of his life. Columbus lived during the time of the inquisition during which Anusim, Jews who practiced their faith in secret, were under constant threat of arrest and tortuous death. Tens of thousands of secret Jews were tortured during the Spanish Inquisition, many dying a martyr's death.

Columbus' identity has been shrouded in mystery and debated for some time. The Italians claimed that Columbus was born in Lugano, Italy to Domenico Colombo, a tower sentinel. The Spaniards claim that he was born on Spanish soil to a father with a different name and trade. Recently, as reported by Charles Garcia of CNN, Spanish scholars Jose Erugo, Otero Sanchez and Nicholas Dias Perez have concluded that Columbus was, in fact, a secret Jew whose voyage to the Indies had another altogether different objective than he claimed.

The content of Columbus' personal letters and diary entries prove most revealing. One telling difference between Columbus' personal writings and those of his contemporaries was the language it was written in, namely one unrecognizable to most native Spaniards. Linguistics professor Estelle Irizarry, after analyzing the language of hundreds of similar letters concluded that it was written in Castilan Spanish or Ladino, a Jewish version of the Spanish language, analogous to what the Yiddish language is to German.

Another revelation is in the mysterious monogram found on his the letters, written right to left. To quote Semitic linguist Maurice David, who discovered the meaning of the symbols, "On all of these... intimate letters the attentive reader can plainly see at the left top corner a little monogram which is... in fact, nothing more…. than an old Hebrew greeting….frequently used among religious Jews all over the world even to this day". The symbol he was referring to were the Hebrew letters bet and heh, which we know to stand for b'ezrat Hashem, or with God's help. Not surprisingly, Columbus' letter to the King and Queen was the only one of his 13 letters studied that did not contain this symbol.

Three of the wishes in Columbus' will and testament also lend a number of telling clues to his identity. One request in his will was that one-tenth of his income be given as charity to provide dowry for poor girls, a commonly practiced Jewish custom that stretches far back. He also requested to have money given to a certain Jew who lived near the Jewish quarter of Lisbon.

Another particularly telltale note in his will seemed to be somewhat of a hidden signature, a triangular form of dots and letters that resembled inscriptions found on gravestones of Jewish cemeteries in Spain. Columbus even instructed his children to maintain this mysterious symbol for perpetuity. The hidden signature, when translated, was actually a prayer in lieu of the standard Hebrew kaddish, which was forbidden in Spain. This ploy allowed Columbus to covertly instruct his children to recite the kaddish prayer for him.

Simon Wiesenthal suggests that the motive behind Columbus' voyage was to find a safe haven for the Jews.

People assume that King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella financed Columbus' journey. But according to Charles Garcia of CNN, two conversos, Louis De Santangel and Gabriel Sanchez, along with the prominent Rabbi Isaac Abarbanel, took money out of their own pockets to pay for the voyage. This historical fact should raise yet another question: Why did these Jews take interest in Columbus' voyage?

Simon Wiesenthal suggests in his book, Sails of Hope, that the motive behind Columbus' voyage was to find a safe haven for the Jews. Similarly, others conclude that Columbus set sail to Asia for the purpose to obtaining enough gold to finance a crusade in an effort to take back Jerusalem and rebuild the Jews' holy Temple. According to Dr. Gerhard Falk, author of a Man's Ascent to Reason, he brought a Hebrew interpreter with him, with the hope of locating the ten lost tribes. (Hence, the popular lyric reads: "In 1492, Colombus sailed the ocean blue. His interpreter was lou, he was a Jew and that is true.")

The day of Columbus' travels are also of noteworthy significance. It is said that he had originally planned on sailing on Tisha b'Av, but postponed his travels because the day is considered inauspicious for such ventures. Instead he began his journey on August 3rd, the 11th of Av, two days after the Jews

were given the choice to convert or leave Spain. For our discerning readers, is this a fact of mere coincidence or of remarkable significance?
On the surface it seems that an ordinary sailor set forth to find a different path to the Indies, and by a remarkable stroke of luck, landed in a land known for its benevolence and religious tolerance. However, upon exploring the true identity of Christopher Columbus, we come to know a man, who, in his quest to free the Jewish people from their oppression, was brought to America by the hand of Divine Providence.
