

Tisha B'Av: A Day of Multiple Perspectives

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Tisha B'Av is a day where we are asked to mourn the destruction of the Temple in a profound manner. While on a superficial level, Tisha B'Av seems to have a single theme, in reality, there are multiple themes apparent in Tisha B'Av. Let us begin by presenting a few questions:

- 1) We find the terms *Tziyon* and *Yerushalayim* used almost interchangeably throughout *Tanach*. Is there a difference between *Tziyon* and *Yerushalayim*?
- 2) In discussing the feelings of the Jewish people on the rivers of Babylon immediately after their exile from Jerusalem, the Psalmist states:

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not; if I set not Jerusalem above my greatest joy.

Tehillim 137:5-6

אם אשכחך ירושלם תשכח ימיני: תדבק
לשוני לחכי אם לא אזכרכי אם לא אעלה את
ירושלם על ראש שמחתי:
תהלים קלז:ה-ו

How is it possible that immediately after such a calamitous event, there could be a reference to *simcha* (happiness)?

- 3) There is a prayer that is inserted into the *Amidah* for *Tisha B'Av* entitled "*Nachem*." In many versions of *Nachem*, the *beracha* that concludes "*Boneh Yerushalayim*" (He builds Jerusalem) is amended to "*Menachem Tziyon U'Voneh Yerushalayim*" (He comforts Zion and builds Jerusalem). This seems to contradict a rule stated in the Gemara, *Berachot* 49a, that one may not conclude a *beracha* with two different themes. How do we conclude the *beracha* of *Nachem* with two different themes?
- 4) The Gemara, *Ta'anit* 29a, records that the Temple was set ablaze on the afternoon of the ninth of Av. One would then assume that the mourning practices intensify as the day progresses. Yet, according to Ashkenazi tradition, the theme of the morning *kinot* is one of crying and weeping over the destruction. It is only in the afternoon when the *Nachem* prayer is recited. What is the logic of this progression?
- 5) When a person is mourning, those who visit the mourner comfort him with the term: המקום הירושלים - *May the Almighty comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem*. Ostensibly, it would be more appropriate to say that the Almighty should comfort you among other mourners who have experienced a similar loss. Why do we specifically reference those who mourn the destruction of *Tziyon* and *Yerushalayim*?

Assessing the Loss

Let's begin answering these questions by assessing what was lost and what wasn't lost at the time of the destruction of the Temple. R. Meir Leibush Weiser (Malbim 1809-1979) suggests that there is a difference between *Tziyon* and *Yerushalayim*:

*Zion connotes the place where the Temple and the Shechinah were situated ... and Jerusalem connotes the city itself, the place where the masses lived.*¹¹⁷

Malbim, Tehillim 51:17

ציון מציין מקום המקדש והשכינה ...
וירושלם מציין העיר עצמה, מקום מושב
ההמון
מלבי"ם תהלים נא:יז

Tisha B'Av commemorates the destruction of the Temple as well as the exile from Jerusalem.¹¹⁸ Yet, the destruction of the Temple did not amount to a total loss. In this section we will note two important components that remained after the destruction of the Temple.

What was the effect of the destruction of the Temple on the place that housed the Temple and on Jerusalem as a city?

Why do I say regarding the Temple and Jerusalem that the original sanctity lasts eternally and the sanctity of the rest of Israel- with respect to the laws of Shemitah and Tithes, etc.- did not remain? This is because the sanctity of the Temple and Jerusalem are a function of the Shechinah and the Shechinah is never nullified

Rambam, Hilchot Beit HaBechirah 6:16

ולמה אני אומר במקדש וירושלים
קדושה ראשונה קדושה לעתיד לבוא,
ובקדושת שאר א"י לענין שביעית
ומעשרות וכיוצא בהן לא קדושה לעתיד
לבוא, לפי שקדושת המקדש וירושלים
מפני השכינה ושכינה אינה בטלה
רמב"ם הלכות בית הבחירה ו:טז

According to Rambam, both the place that housed the Temple and the entire Jerusalem retained their original sanctity, even after their destruction. The sanctity of Jerusalem still exists today.¹¹⁹ For this reason, we still pray towards Jerusalem (and towards the Temple Mount when in Jerusalem).¹²⁰ There is also a mitzvah to live in Jerusalem, even after the destruction of the Temple.¹²¹

Most importantly, the destruction of the Temple did not entail destruction of the Jewish people. The Midrash comments on the peculiar opening of Psalm 79:

117 See R. Yechiel M. Tukatzinski, *Ir HaKodesh V'HaMikdash* Vol. II, Chapter 2, for a lengthy discussion regarding whether *Tziyon* and *Yerushalayim* are two separate geographical locations or one. He does suggest that even if they are two distinct locations, certain verses reference *Tziyon* as the place where the Temple stood. Nevertheless, he does not that there are verses that also refer to *Yerushalayim* as the place where the Temple stood.

118 R. Hershel Schachter, *B'Ikvei HaTzon* no. 33, notes that Jerusalem has a dual significance. First, it is the city that houses the Temple. Second it is the capital city of the Land of Israel.

119 Ra'avad *Hilchot Beit HaBechirah* 6:14, disagrees and maintains that the status of the Temple and Jerusalem changed upon destruction of the Temple. This dispute is very relevant to the discussion of ascending the Temple Mount.

120 See Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 94:1, and R. Tukatzinski, loc. cit., Vol III, chapter 16.

121 See *Teshuvot Chatam Sofer*, Y.D. no. 234.

A Psalm of Asaph. O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance; they have defiled Thy holy temple; they have made Jerusalem into heaps.

Tehillim 79:1

מזמור לאספ אלהים באו גוים
בנחלתך טמאו את היכל קדשך שמו
את ירושלים לעיים:
תהילים עט:א

Why would a Psalm that discusses the destruction of the Temple begin with a song?

A psalm of Asaph. O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance (Ps. LXXIX, r). The text should have used a phrase like, 'Weeping of Asaph,' 'Lament of Asaph,' 'Dirge of Asaph'; why does it say, 'A psalm of Asaph'? It may be likened to a king who erected a bridal-chamber for his son which he plastered, cemented, and decorated; but his son entered upon an evil course of living. The king forthwith ascended to the chamber, tore the curtains and broke the rods; but [the son's] tutor took a piece of rod which he used as a flute and played upon it. People said to him, 'The king has overthrown his son's chamber and you sit playing a tune!' He replied to them, 'I play a tune because the king overturned his son's chamber but did not pour out his anger upon his son.' Similarly people said to Asaph, 'The Holy One, blessed be He, has caused Temple and Sanctuary to be destroyed, and you sit singing a Psalm!' He replied to them, 'I sing a Psalm because the Holy One, blessed be He, poured out His wrath upon wood and stone and not upon Israel ...

Eicha Rabbah 4:14 (Soncino Translation)

מזמור לאספ אלקים באו גוים
בנחלתך לא הוה קרא צריך למימר
אלא בכי לאספ נהי לאספ קינה
לאספ ומה אומר מזמור לאספ אלא
משל למלך שעשה בית חופה לבנו
וסיידה וכיידה וציירה ויצא בנו
לתרבות רעה מיד עלה המלך לחופה
וקרע את הוילאות ושיבר את הקנים
ונטל פדגוג שלו איבוב של קנים
והיה מזמר אמרו לו המלך הפך
חופתו של בנו ואת יושב ומזמר
אמר להם מזמר אני שהפך חופתו
של בנו ולא שפך חמתו על בנו כך
אמרו לאספ הקב"ה החריב היכל
ומקדש ואתה יושב ומזמר אמר להם
מזמר אני ששפך הקב"ה חמתו על
העצים ועל האבנים ולא שפך חמתו
על ישראל הדא הוא דכתיב ויצת
אש בציון ותאכל יסודותיה.

איכה רבה ד:יז

The Midrash notes that destruction could have been much worse. The Almighty could have decided to destroy the Jewish people for their iniquities. Instead, he decided to destroy the Temple and exile the Jewish people. This punishment pales in comparison to what could have been.

Appreciating What Remained as a Source of Comfort

The remnants of the destruction actually provide a source of comfort. The destruction of the Temple was very tragic and is a cause for mourning. We mourn the Temple and Jerusalem by appreciating what was lost and we comfort ourselves in appreciating what remains.

On Tisha B'Av, we attempt to appreciate the losses and take comfort in what remains. The theme of the morning *Kinnot* is crying over the loss of the Temple.¹²² R. Yosef D. Soloveitchik (cited in *Harerei Kedem* Vol. II page 311) notes that in order to properly cry over the destruction

¹²² See R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lord is Righteous in All His Ways* (R. Jacob J. Schacter ed.) pages 17-31.

of the Temple, one must mention the glory and grandeur of the Temple and Jerusalem when it was erect and contrast that with the impact of its destruction.

By contrast, the theme of Tisha B'Av afternoon is *nechama*, comfort. How is it possible that the afternoon is the time designated for comfort? Shouldn't the moment that the Temple was set ablaze be the moment of intense crying? R. Soloveitchik explains that it was precisely at the moment when the Temple was set ablaze that the Jewish people realized that they would not be destroyed. They took comfort in the fact that G-d only took his wrath out on wood and stones.¹²³

Based on this idea, one can explain the concluding *beracha* of *Nachem*. R. Chaim Benveniste (1603-1673) writes that concluding a *beracha* with "*Menachem Tziyon U'Voneh Yerushalayim*" does not violate the rule that one may not conclude a *beracha* with two different themes:

It is not two different ideas because comforting Zion means that it will be rebuilt because its comfort is achieved through its rebuilding.

Shayarei Kneset HaGedolah, O.C. 188:5

לאו היינו שני דברים דמנחם ציון היינו שיבנה
דבנין ציון היא נחמתה.
שיירי כנסת הגדולה או"ח קפח:ה

The mourners of Zion are comforted by the fact that Jerusalem will one day be rebuilt. Therefore, when one recites "*Menachem Tziyon U'Voneh Yerushalayim*" it is considered one theme.

It is possible to add another dimension to the text of "*Menachem Tziyon U'Voneh Yerushalayim*." The remnants of the destruction are the bridge between the first two Temples and the third. The sanctity of the Temple always remained and the Jewish people who will occupy the third Temple are (or will be) descendants of the original inhabitants of the Temples. As such, the third Temple is currently in the process of being rebuilt (and was in the process since the original destruction). In fact, the term "*Boneh Yerushalayim*" means He Who is building Jerusalem, in the present tense.

R. Chaim Freidlander comments:

"Blessed is He Who Builds Jerusalem." We recite 'builds Jerusalem' in the present tense and not 'He will build Jerusalem' in the future tense because the idea is not that nowadays in the exile there exists destruction and void and in the future the Temple we be built. Rather, even during the destruction, the Almighty arranges all events in stages, in anticipation of the ultimate redemption. We don't yet see or understand how these events unfold and how they bring about the redemption, but after Jerusalem will be rebuilt in actuality, we will understand retrospectively how all of the

בא"י בונה ירושלים" אנו אומרים 'בונה ירושלים' בהווה ולא יבנה ירושלים בלשון עתיד כי אין הענין שעתה בזמן הגלות קיים חורבן והעדר ולעתיד יבנה בית המקדש אלא גם בזמן החורבן הקב"ה מוביל בכל המאורעות בשלבים לקראת הגאולה והבנין אלא שעדיין אנו איננו רואים ומבינים איך הדברים מתגלגלים ומקרבים את הגאולה רק לאחר שירושלים תבנה בפועל נבין

123 Ibid, pages 32-39. This idea was also expressed by R. Chaim Vital (1543-1620), *Sha'ar HaKavanot, Drushei Chag Shavuot* no. 1.

various stages of the exile brought about the redemption.
Therefore, the Almighty is "building Jerusalem" in the present tense.

Rinat Chaim page 192

למפרע איך כל השתלשלות שלבי
הגלות קירבו ובנו את הגאולה לכן גם
בהווה הקב"ה "בונה ירושלים"
רינת חיים עמ' קצב

We can now explain why the mourners sitting on the rivers of Babylon were able to focus on happiness. While they just experienced a major tragedy, one which they swore never to forget, they were also able to take comfort in the fact that they were already in the rebuilding process. The sanctity of the Temple remained and the continuity of the Jewish people was ensured. While they were still mourning, they were able to see a time when they would be able to experience happiness, albeit tempered through certain mourning processes.¹²⁴

Based on this idea, perhaps we can explain why we comfort someone who lost a loved one "among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." For many reasons we can't compare the loss of a relative to the loss of the Temple. Yet, the comfort process is similar. The mourner should reflect on the achievements, values and character traits of the deceased as a guide to his own rebuilding process. The mourner is encouraged to build on the legacy of the deceased in order to find comfort.

Conclusion

The idea of finding comfort in the rebuilding process is illustrated in the following story:

Once again they were coming up to Jerusalem together, and just as they came to Mount Scopus they saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. They fell a-weeping and R. Akiba seemed merry. Wherefore, said they to him, are you merry? Said he: Wherefore are you weeping? Said they to him: A place of which it was once said, And the common man that draweth nigh shall be put to death, is now become the haunt of foxes, and should we not weep? Said he to them: Therefore am I merry; for it is written, And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the Son of Jeberechiah. Now what connection has this Uriah the priest with Zechariah? Uriah lived during the times of the first Temple, while [the other,] Zechariah lived [and prophesied] during the second Temple; but Holy-Writ linked the [later] prophecy of Zechariah with the [earlier] prophecy of Uriah, In the [earlier] prophecy [in the days] of Uriah it is written, Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field etc. In Zechariah it is written, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Jerusalem, so long as Uriah's [threatening] prophecy had not had its fulfilment, I had misgivings lest

פעם אחת היו עולין לירושלים כיון שהגיעו להר הצופים קרעו בגדיהם כיון שהגיעו להר הבית ראו שועל שיצא מבית קדשי הקדשים התחילו הן בוכין ורבי עקיבא מצחק אמרו לו מפני מה אתה מצחק אמר להם מפני מה אתם בוכים אמרו לו מקום שכתוב בו והזר הקרב יומת ועכשיו שועלים הלכו בו ולא נבכה אמר להן לכך אני מצחק דכתיב ואעידה לי עדים נאמנים את אוריה הכהן ואת זכריה בן יברכיהו וכי מה ענין אוריה אצל זכריה אוריה במקדש ראשון וזכריה במקדש שני אלא תלה הכתוב נבואתו של זכריה בנבואתו של אוריה באוריה כתיב לכן בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש בזכריה כתיב עוד ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלים עד שלא נתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה הייתי מתיירא שלא נתקיים נבואתו של זכריה עכשיו

124 The Talmud, *Baba Batra* 60b, cites this verse as the source that we must continue to mourn the Temple throughout the year (see Rashbam, ad loc.). These laws are found in *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. no 560.

Zechariah's prophecy might not be fulfilled; now that Uriah's prophecy has been [literally] fulfilled, it is quite certain that Zechariah's prophecy also is to find its literal fulfilment. Said they to him: Akiba, you have comforted us! Akiba, you have comforted us!

Makkot 24b (Soncino Translation)

שנתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה בידוע
שנבואתו של זכריה מתקיימת בלשון
הזה אמרו לו עקיבא ניחמתנו עקיבא
ניחמתנו
מכות כד:

R. Akiva was able to comfort his colleagues by shifting their focus from the tragedy to the rebuilding process. When we mourn the destruction of the Temple on Tisha B'Av, we first try to experience the depth of the tragedy through the *Kinnot*. In the afternoon, we try to find comfort by shifting our focus to the rebuilding process. It is our prayer that in the merit of properly mourning the Temple, we should be able to experience the grandeur and glory of the third Temple.