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Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

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Tisha B'Av 5772



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Rabbi Ramon Widmonte

Collected Tisha B'Av Insights from YU Community Rebbetzins

Rebbetzin Naomi Dardik • Rebbetzin Tikvah Ellis
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The first and central *kinah* for *Tisha b'Av* is *Megillat Eicha*. The Talmud (*Baba Batra* 14a) even refers to *Eicah* as the book of *Kinot* (Lamentations). The word *Eicha* represents the critical ingredient necessary to transform this day of sadness and mourning to a day of solace and jubilation. To solve the tragedy of *Eicha*, “How could this happen?,” we must scrutinize how the realities of this Diaspora came to be. While the first Temple was destroyed due to the lack of embrace of the *sh'mittah* year, acts of idol worship and sexual promiscuity, the second Temple was destroyed for a singular issue, *sin'at chinam* – baseless hatred, the lack of respect for one another.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik was fond of saying that the best way to understand a word is to analyze the first time it appears in the Torah. The word *איכה*, *eicha*, first appears in the Torah as *איכה*, *ayekah*, (*Bereshiet* 3:9) when Hashem asks Adam and Chava “where are you?” If we are to solve the national calamity of *גולה* *golah*, exile and Diaspora, and move to a state of *גאולה* *geulah*, redemption, then we must recognize that the phonetic difference between these two words is one letter, *aleph*, representing the role of *אני*, the individual. In responding to the question *eicha*, how did this happen we must ask ourselves *ayekah*, where are we?

Rav Naphtali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin explains in his introduction to *Sefer Bereshiet* that the calamity of the Diaspora occurred when those involved with Torah study were not willing to recognize that there are multiple gateways of service to God. “The pious, the righteous and those steeped in Torah study were not virtuous in their interactions with others. They had baseless hatred of others in their hearts. They looked askance at those who served Hashem differently ... thinking that they were *zadukim* and *apikorsim*, apostates and heretics. It is for this reason that death and civil unrest [came to our people], and all the evils that happened in the world culminating with the destruction of the [second] Temple occurred.”

It is not coincidental that the *troph*, cantillations, for *Megillat Eicha* and *Megillat Esther* are similar. What separates these two *megillot* is not the masoretic musical notes, but rather the tone in which they are expressed. It is a keen reminder that the Moshiach is born on this day of *Tisha b'Av* and his ability to act is dependent on each one of us. When we answer the question of *ayekah*, where are we, in the way we treat other Jews and other human beings, we solve the problem of *Eicha*, how could this have happened and how do we change the status quo. Our personal commitment to engage in the solution instead of being part of the problem changes *golah* to *geulah*.

Hopefully the learning we share from our Roshei Yeshiva, faculty, and communal leaders, will empower and enable us to become more focused change agents enabling *geulah* to happen.

Wishing you all a meaningful three weeks and fast.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

The David Mitzner Dean, Yeshiva University
Center for the Jewish Future

Profiles in Churban¹

Rabbi Reuven Brand

Rosh Kollel, Yeshiva University Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago

Introduction

Tisha Bav sharpens our awareness of the immeasurable loss of the Beit Hamikdash, as we mourn and lament its destruction. Yet, the Midrash suggests that there is, in fact, a greater devastation than the loss of the house of G-d. The rabbis of the Midrash tackle a difficult passage in Tehillim, which begins:

A Psalm of Asaf. God, the nations have come into Your inheritance; they have desecrated Your Holy Temple; they have turned Jerusalem into heaps.

Tehillim 79:1

מְזֹמֵר, לְאֶסֶף: אֱלֹהִים, בָּאוּ גוֹיִם בְּנִחְלָתָךְ - טָמְאוּ, אֶת
הַיִּכַל קֹדֶשְׁךָ; שָׂמוּ אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַם לְעֵיִם.
תהילים עט:א

The Midrash explains the difficulty and the resolution:

A Psalm of Asaph. God, the nations have come into Your inheritance. The text should have used a phrase like, 'Weeping of Asaf,' 'Lament of Asaf,' 'Dirge of Asaf'; why does it say, 'A psalm of Asaf'? 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 immediately 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 Asaf, '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 (adapted from Soncino Translation)

מְזֹמֵר לְאֶסֶף אֱלֹהִים בָּאוּ גוֹיִם
בְּנִחְלָתְךָ לֹא הוּא קָרָא צְרִיךְ לְמִימַר
אֵלָּא בְּכִי לְאֶסֶף נְהִי לְאֶסֶף קִינָה
לְאֶסֶף וּמָה אֹמֵר מְזֹמֵר לְאֶסֶף אֵלָּא
מִשָּׁל לְמֶלֶךְ שֶׁעָשָׂה בֵּית חוֹפֵה לְבָנו
וּסְיִידָה וְכִיידָה וְצִיירָה וַיֵּצֵא בְנו
לְתַרְבוֹת רַעָה מִיַּד עֵלָה הַמֶּלֶךְ
לְחוֹפֵה וְקָרַע אֶת הַוִּילָאוֹת וְשִׁיבַר
אֶת הַקִּנִּים וְנִטַּל פְּדָגוּג שְׁלוֹ אֵיבֹב
שֶׁל קִנִּים וְהִיָּה מְזַמֵּר אִמְרוּ לוֹ
הַמֶּלֶךְ הִפֵּךְ חוֹפְתוֹ שֶׁל בְּנו וְאֵת
יּוֹשֵׁב וּמְזַמֵּר אִמְרָה לְהֵם מְזַמֵּר אֲנִי
שֶׁהִפֵּךְ חוֹפְתוֹ שֶׁל בְּנו וְלֹא שֶׁפֶךְ
חִמְתוֹ עַל בְּנו כִּךְ אִמְרוּ לְאֶסֶף
הַקֵּב"ה הַחֲרִיב הַיִּכַל וּמְקַדֵּשׁ וְאֵתָה
יּוֹשֵׁב וּמְזַמֵּר אִמְרָה לְהֵם מְזַמֵּר אֲנִי
שֶׁשֶׁפֶךְ הַקֵּב"ה חִמְתוֹ עַל הָעֵצִים
וְעַל הָאֲבָנִים וְלֹא שֶׁפֶךְ חִמְתוֹ עַל
יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲדָא הוּא דְכָתִיב וַיִּצַת אֵשׁ
בְּצִיּוֹן וְתֹאכַל יְסוּדוֹתֶיהָ.
איכה רבה ד:יז

¹ I would like to thank the following people for their assistance in the preparation of this article: Rabbi Hayyim Angel, Rabbi Josh Flug, Mrs. Ora Lee Kanner, Rabbi Menachem Leibtag, Rabbi Dr. Shnayer Leiman, Professor Leslie Newman, Dr. Haym Soloveitchik, Dr. Daniel Tsadik and Rev. Salomon Vas Dias.

At first glance, it is impossible to fathom associating the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash with a *mizmor*- a song. Yet, we learn that the rabbis viewed the destruction of the physical edifice of the Beit Hamikdash as an act of Divine kindness; instead of pouring his wrath on the Jewish people, the Divine punishment was meted out on the inanimate building materials of the sanctuary.² Despite the great tragedy that is the *Churban Beit Hamikdash*, the destruction of the Jewish people is an even more tragic loss.

This observation is quite understandable. The Beit Hamikdash is valued because it serves as the focus of the Divine presence in this world. It is endowed with holiness because of its intense spiritual character and serves as a *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of G-d's name) bringing G-d into the space and focus of the world. However, there is a greater resting place of the Divine presence and source of *Kiddush Hashem* in the world: the Jewish people. We, the nation of Hashem, are charged with the awesome task of housing G-d in our lives and representing Him in this world. Perhaps even the Beit Hamikdash itself was only a means to channel G-d's presence into the lives of the Jewish people, as it says:

You shall make a Temple for me and I will dwell in them.
Shemot 25:8

ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם.
 שמות כה:ח

This is why the destruction of the people of Hashem is the ultimate *Chilul Hashem* (desecration of G-d's name), as we are the bearers of the Divine presence.

Millions of Jews have walked the timeline of Jewish history, ending their lives sanctifying the name of G-d. Separated geographically and temporally, on Tisha Bav we remember them together and mourn their destruction just as we mourn the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. Our traditional *Kinnot* make mention of some specific individuals and has allusions to many others.

Specifically, the sages of Israel are the giants upon whom much of the responsibility to carry the name of Hashem rests. As the Midrash teaches, our forefathers were the *merkavah laShechinah* - the chariot of the Divine presence.³ Hence, their demise in particular is akin to the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. Perhaps this is why, in the context of the fast of Gedalya, the Talmud teaches:

The fast of the seventh month is on the third of Tishrei, which is the day that Gedaliah ben Achikam was killed. Who killed him? Yishmael ben Netanya. [The fact that we fast for the murder of one person [teaches] that the death of the righteous is compared to the burning of the Holy Temple.

Rosh Hashanah 18b

צום השביעי זה ג' בתשרי שבו
 נהרג גדליה בן אחיקם ומי הרגו
 ישמעאל בן נתניה הרגו ללמדך
 ששקולה מיתתן של צדיקים
 כשריפת בית אלהינו.
ראש השנה יח:

Thousands of Torah scholars over the millennia have perished *al Kiddush Hashem*, and we contemplate their loss of Tisha Bav.⁴

² For the Halachic implications of this concept and its application on Tisha Bav, see *Biur HaGra* O.C. 554 s.k. 2.

³ Ramban develops this concept in his brief introduction to his commentary on *Sefer Shemot*.

⁴ Perhaps this is why, in our Mussaf of Yom Kippur, once we conclude the portion of the *Avodah*- the description of the Temple service- we lament our lack of a *Beit Hamikdash* and immediately follow it with a lament for the

Below is a tiny glimpse into the lives of several great Torah scholars whose martyrdom we contemplate on Tisha Bav. They span the vast reach of our exile and represent only a minute fraction of the number and stature of rabbinic figures, prominent bearers of the presence of G-d, whom we have tragically lost.

Rabbi Chanina Ben Tradyon

Eretz Yisrael, 2nd century

We dedicate a specific Tisha Bav *kinnah* (*Arzei Halevanon*) to a group of Mishnaic Rabbis who died during the Roman persecutions in the aftermath of the destruction of the Beit Hamidkash. There are four editions of a Midrash known as “*Midrash Harugei Malchut*” that describe what we call the story of the “Ten Martyrs.” The exact description of the Midrash, which presents a Roman tribunal condemning ten Rabbis to death as punishment for the sale of Yosef, has been debated by scholars in terms of its historical veracity. Whether the precise details of the background are allegorical or historical is not germane to the purpose of the *kinnah*, which is to give us a sense of the excruciatingly difficult state of the Jews living in Israel after the *Churban Beit Hamikdash*.⁵

One of the ten martyrs mentioned in the *kinnah* is Rabbi Chanina (or Chanania) Ben Tradyon. Rabbi Chanina was a second generation sage of the Mishna who lived in Sakhnin in the Galilee during the Hadrianic persecutions of the second century. He was known to be a particularly scrupulous and pious individual, who was appointed as an overseer of the communal charity fund. His primary pursuit was the study of Torah, and his teachings and rulings appear in numerous locations in the Talmud. It was his unwavering commitment that ultimately brought his untimely demise as the Talmud records:

They brought R. Chanina ben Tradyon and said to him "why did you study Torah?" He said to them "Because this is what my G-d commanded." Immediately, they sentenced him to death by fire, his wife to death by sword and his daughter to live among prostitutes.

Avodah Zarah 17b

אתיוהו לרבי חנינא בן תרדיון אמרו
ליה אמאי קא עסקת באורייתא אמר
להו כאשר צוני ה' אלהי מיד גזרו עליו
לשריפה ועל אשתו להריגה ועל בתו
לישב בקובה של זונות.
עבודה זרה יז:

The continuation of the passages describes the execution of Rabbi Chanina:

They found R. Chanina ben Tradyon who was sitting and studying Torah and gathering many congregations [for study] and there was a sefer Torah in his lap. They brought him and wrapped him in the sefer Torah and wrapped him in bundles of branches and lit them on fire. They brought wool sponges and soaked them in the water and placed them on his heart so that he would not die

מצאוהו לרבי חנינא בן תרדיון
שהיה יושב ועוסק בתורה ומקהיל
קהלות ברבים וס"ת מונח לו בחיקו
הביאוהו וכרכוהו בס"ת והקיפוהו
בחבילי זמורות והציתו בהן את
האור והביאו ספוגין של צמר
וישראו במים והניחום על לבו כדי

martyred rabbis of the Roman persecutions. This destruction, too, is not only a result of the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* but an approximate equivalent.

⁵ Rabbi Menachem Leibtag notes that the reference to the sale of Yosef in the context of the aftermath of the destruction of the second Temple has a pointed message. The Talmud (*Yoma* 9) teaches that this Temple was destroyed due senseless hatred, the precipitant of the sale of Yosef.

quickly. His daughter said to him "Father, how can I see you like this?" He said to her, "If I were being burned alone, it would be difficult for me. Now that I am being burned with a sefer Torah, Whoever will seeks retribution for the desecration of the sefer Torah (i.e., G-d), will also seek retribution for my desecration." His students said to him, "Our teacher, what do you see?" He said "The parchments are burning but the letters are flying."

Avodah Zarah 18a

שלא תצא נשמתו מהרה אמרה לו
בתו אבא אראך בכך אמר לה
אילמלי אני נשרפתי לבדי היה
הדבר קשה לי עכשיו שאני נשרף
וס"ת עמי מי שמבקש עלבונה של
ס"ת הוא יבקש עלבוני אמרו לו
תלמידיו רבי מה אתה רואה אמר
להן גליון נשרפין ואותיות פורחות
עבודה זרה ית.

Rabbi Chanina's devotion to Torah and its holiness is manifest in this nearly superhuman form of *Kiddush Hashem*. The image of the scroll burning with its letters soaring to heaven have accompanied generations of Jewish martyrs long after Rabbi Chanina's passing.

Rabbi Elchanan of Dampierre

France, 12th century

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries- the age of the Tosafists- was a period of remarkable Halachic creativity for Ashkenazic communities in France. Following a period of emphasis on exegesis by rabbinic luminaries including Rashi (1040- 1105), a seismic shift occurred as students began to embrace a new approach to Talmudic study: dialectic. This revolution was created by Rashi's grandson, Rabbi Yaakov of Ramerupt (1100- 1171), who analyzed the Talmud as an integrated whole and sought to resolve potentially conflicting passages with a new systematic, creative method. Rabbi Yaakov, known as Rabbeinu Tam, wrote little and his teachings might well have been lost had it not been for his nephew and student, Rabbi Yitzchak of Dampierre (d. ca. 1198), who organized and dictated these lessons to students who recorded them in writing.

Despite this remarkable flourishing of Torah, the Jewish community was in a precarious position. The first crusade in 1096, which decimated the Jewish communities of the neighboring Rhine valley, incited violence in France, and the Jewish community of Rouen was destroyed. On the second day of Shavuot 1146, a band of marauders ransacked Ramerupt and beat Rabbeinu Tam, wounding him severely. The help of a passing nobleman enabled him to escape death. In 1171, a blood libel in Blois led to the burning of the entire congregation, which was commemorated in a fast day for centuries by European Jews.

Rabbi Yitzchak of Dampierre, known as Ri, had four primary students, who wrote his teachings and the teachings of Rabbeinu Tam, known as Tosafot, on the various Talmudic tractates. The first of these four disciples was Ri's son, Rabbi Elchanan. Rabbi Elchanan's wife was the sister of a well known Tosafist, Rabbi Shmuel of Falaise. His son, Rabbi Shmuel, was a noted Tosafist, who is cited in various Tosafot as Rabbi Shmuel ben Rabbi Elchanan. Rabbi Elchanan authored several Halachic works and responsa, in addition to Tosafot which he wrote. His students included noted French Talmudists Rabbi Yechiel of Paris and Rabbi Peretz of Corbeil. He was at least fifty years old and possibly in the midst of glossing tractate Avodah Zara, when he was killed in a pogrom in Dampierre in 1184 during the lifetime of his father.

Rabbi Isaac de Castro Tartas

Brazil/ Portugal, 17th century

In the aftermath of expulsion of the Jews of Spain in 1492, the Catholic Church promoted a series of local church courts to investigate and prosecute Christian heretics, primarily those who had converted from Judaism and were suspected of maintaining their Jewish beliefs and practices. Known as the Inquisition, these courts tortured and killed myriads of *Annusim*, or Marranos, throughout the vast reaches of Christendom for centuries. Nonetheless, many “New Christians” continued to maintain their Jewish identity and practices.

One such Jew was Isaac de Castro, whose parents had escaped Portugal and settled in Tartas, in southern France. Isaac was born around 1623 and was the brother of David Castro Tartas, a famous printer in Amsterdam, where his family had moved and practiced Judaism openly.

Early in life, Isaac went to Parahiba, Brazil, where he lived for several years. He then moved to Bahia dos Santos in Brazil. Although he was not formally known as a *haham*, he was a deeply learned man, and reportedly was engaged in studying and teaching Torah. He was soon recognized as a Jew, arrested by the Inquisition, and sent to Lisbon. Summoned before the tribunal of the Inquisition, he at once reaffirmed his belief in Judaism and his determination to remain true to the faith. All the endeavors of the inquisitors to convert him to Christianity were in vain.

On Dec. 15, 1647 he was led, together with five fellow-sufferers, to be burned at the stake. In the midst of the flames he called out, “Shema Yisrael,” a cry which deeply resonated with the *Annusim* of Portugal. In Amsterdam, the tragic end of this promising young man occasioned deep mourning. A memorial sermon was delivered, and elegies in Hebrew and in Spanish were written in his honor by prominent Jews, including a descendant of the Abravanel. The reign of terror of the Inquisition finally ended with its abolishment on March 30, 1782 by King Ferdinand IV.

Rabbi Mann of Veizin

Lithuania, 18th century

In Veizin, a small suburb of Vilna, in the 18th century, lived an apostate. Angered by the rejection and insults of the Jewish community, he set out to take revenge on his former coreligionists with a nefarious plan. One night ahead of the final days of Sukkot, the apostate stole an icon from a local Catholic church and hid it under the Aron Kodesh in the synagogue. He quickly went to the local parish priest and foretold an upcoming Jewish ritual in which the Jews would take a Christian icon and beat it with willow branches on a specific date. The news enraged the Christian authorities, who bided their time until the date which the apostate had mentioned: Hoshana Rabbah.

On that fateful morning, while the Jewish community was assembled at prayer holding their *hoshanot* (willow branches), the local authorities burst into the shul and found an icon under the Aron kodesh. They immediately charged the Jews with crimes against the church. The Jews stood shocked, stunned in silence. This was interpreted as an admission of guilt, and an anti-Jewish pogrom was unleashed. Many Jews were beaten, maimed and killed. Those who

survived quaked with the fear of the unknown fate that would befall them after the formal trial that they would face.

In the midst of this crisis, Rabbi Mann, an elderly pious member of the community secretly approached the Catholic authorities.⁶ He figured that if he would accept the blame for the incident, then the rest of the community would be spared. The local authorities accepted his admission, and Rabbi Mann stood trial for his “crimes.” On the seventeenth of Tammuz, he was burned at the stake.

For decades, the Jewish community of Vilna, the nearby major Jewish population center, observed annual memorial prayers in memory of “the Kadosh” Rabbi Mann, as he was known for his martyrdom including a unique מלא מלא, whose text is extant, that was composed in his memory.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt”l recalled as a young man hearing a memorial prayer recited in Vilna for the holy Rabbi Mann, whose story was known throughout Vilna and the surrounding Lithuanian Jewish communities.

Rabbi Menachem Ziemba

Poland, 20th century

Rabbi Menachem Ziemba was born in 1883 into a poor Polish, Chasidic family. While still a young man, he distinguished himself by his remarkable erudition. He studied for 20 years, during which time he was supported by his wealthy father-in-law. After the death of his father-in-law (about 1917), Rabbi Ziemba was forced to run his father-in-law's business, but he was not successful, and after years of hardship he agreed in 1935 to become a member of the Warsaw rabbinical council. He had been an active participant in Agudat Yisrael and a member of the council of the Warsaw Jewish community.

Rabbi Ziemba was a prominent rabbinic leader in the Warsaw ghetto and one of the last Warsaw rabbis to remain in the ghetto after the first wave of extermination. Dr. Hillel Seidman, chief archivist of the Warsaw ghetto, described Rabbi Ziemba's presence in the ghetto:

Throughout the many vicissitudes of the Ghetto, Rav Ziemba's apartment remained a source of light, warmth and encouragement. He had to move house five times – either because of the contraction of the Ghetto or for his own safety – but always his home was full of people seeking advice or reassurance. They were not disappointed. The wisdom and unshakable trust of generations was distilled in Rav Menachem's personality; with his genius, he had little difficulty in finding the apt phrase suitable for each petitioner and every occasion. All his sentiments were rooted in Torah sources and reflected the eternal truths.

Dr. Seidman described how under extreme danger, Rabbi Ziemba broke open the roof of his apartment to construct a primitive Sukkah. Rabbi Ziemba oversaw a network of underground Yeshivot in bunkers and cellars, visiting the students, testing them in their studies and encouraging them, while outside chaos reigned.

⁶ Accounts of this story differ as to whether “Reb Mann” was formally a Rabbi or just a pious elder.

At a meeting of its surviving leaders on January 14, 1943, he gave his approval and blessing for an uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. In an inspiring address, he stated:

Of necessity, we must resist the enemy on all fronts.... We shall no longer heed his instructions... Sanctification of the Divine Name manifests itself in varied ways. During the First Crusade, at the end of the 11th century, the Halakhah ... determined one way of reacting to the distress of the Franco-German Jews, whereas in the middle of the 20th century, during the liquidation of the Jews in Poland, it prompts us to react in an entirely different manner. In the past, during religious persecution, we were required by the law 'to give up our lives even for the least essential practice.' In the present, however, when we are faced by an arch foe, whose unparalleled ruthlessness and program of total annihilation know no bounds, the Halakhah demands that we fight and resist to the very end with unequalled determination and valor for the sake of Sanctification of the Divine Name.

Rabbi Ziemba's scholarly works acquired great renown among students since they were an unusual amalgam of the dialectical approach common in Poland and the logical and penetrating method of the Lithuanian yeshivot. He published a volume of responsa, *Zera Avraham* (1920), and a monograph on the laws of carry on Shabbat *Totze'ot Chayyim* (1921) before the war. However, his life's work, consisting of manuscripts of sermons, commentary on the Talmud Yerushalmi and Rambam and many more responsa were lost in the Holocaust.

Rabbi Ziemba insisted on remaining in the Ghetto and fell prey to the Nazi murderers at the beginning of the uprising in the Spring of 1943. His remains were reinterred in Jerusalem in 1958.

Rabbi Dr. David Halevi Applebaum

Jerusalem, 21st century

Rabbi Dr. David Applebaum was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1952 and grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. He spent his teenage years studying at Hebrew Theological College in Chicago under the tutelage of Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik. He became one of Rabbi Soloveichik's foremost disciples and continued studying with him at Yeshivas Brisk; Rabbi Applebaum received Yoreh Yoreh and Yadin Yadin semicha from Rabbi Soloveichik.

While in Chicago, he earned his B.A. from Northeastern University in 1972 and a master's degree in biological sciences at Northwestern University. He received his M.D. from the Medical College of Ohio in 1978.

In 1981, after his residency, he emigrated to Israel with his wife, Debra, where he served as a medical director of Magen David Adom, Israel's ambulance corps, in Jerusalem, as well as working in Shaare Zedek Hospital from 1985 to 1988. He left the hospital to found the Terem Immediate Care Center, which revolutionized emergency care in Jerusalem by treating relatively minor injuries in a freestanding clinic, freeing up hospital emergency rooms to deal with more serious cases. In 1986, Dr. Applebaum was presented with an award by the Knesset after treating terror victims at the scene of an attack on King George Street in Jerusalem while still under fire.

In 2002, Dr. Applebaum was appointed head of Shaare Zedek Medical Center's Department of Emergency Medicine, and was viewed in Israel's medical community as one of the country's

leaders in the field. He introduced a number of groundbreaking changes to improve efficiency, introduced the computer tracking of patients, and was insistent on cutting waiting time to an absolute minimum. Dr. Applebaum was on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including Shabbat. When he was out of the hospital, he continued to monitor the treatment of each patient via a computer connection, even when he was abroad. He was a scholar, who authored dozens of articles in medicine and Halacha, and lectured internationally.

David and Debra had two sons and four daughters; David was active at home in the lives of his children and his extended family. Their daughter, Naava, was engaged to be married on September 10, 2003, and on the eve of the wedding, Dr. Appelbaum took Naava for an outing together to Café Hillel on Emek Refaim street in Jerusalem. At 11:20pm a Hamas terrorist detonated his explosives in the café, killing seven people. Among the victims were Naava Appelbaum, the bride-to-be, and her father, Rabbi Dr. David Appelbaum, the remarkable physician who had spent years administering medical care for Israel's victims of terror.

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Tishah B'Av: Mourning and *Mo'ed*

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

Understanding the Day

It is clear that there are many layers within Tishah B'Av. It is a day that is, at once, marked as a “*mo'ed*”, or festival, labeled now and destined for the future to contain a joyous character; and at the same time it is observed as the saddest day on the Jewish calendar, with fasting and crying dominating the day. However, this complexity is found even before one contrasts the day's present with its future – attempting to understand the occasion as it takes one down a path of competing characterizations.

The question begins with the undeniable observation that Tishah B'Av is treated with a severity that transcends even other fast days of the year, including those fast days that are also dedicated to marking the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. While a standard fast day (other than Yom HaKippurim) is usually observed during the daytime hours, and requires only the avoidance of food and drink, Tishah B'Av is a 25 hour ordeal, mandating the abstention from the five areas of physical benefit prohibited on Yom HaKippurim (eating and drinking, bathing, anointing with oils, wearing of shoes, and marital relations), in addition to other mournful practices.

The Talmud¹³ provides the first step in understanding this distinction when it notes that Tishah B'Av is unique because it is a time of “multiplied tragedies”.

As noted by *Tosafot*,¹⁴ this phrase cannot simply mean that many bad things happened on that day; other days, such as the 17th of Tammuz, also hosted multiple calamities. Rather, the *Tosafot* suggest two alternative understandings: a) The distinction is not quantitative, but qualitative; the severity of the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash simply transcends that of other

¹³ *Rosh HaShanah* 18b.

¹⁴ *ibid.* s.v. *ho'il*.

tragedies. B) While other days hosted multiple tragedies, Tishah B'Av is unique in that the same disaster happened twice.

While these approaches help to explain the basis for treating Tishah B'Av with greater severity, we are still left to understand the process and the framework by which Tishah B'Av is distinguished from other fast days. Upon consideration, it emerges that this contrast can happen through one of two perspectives: either the intensification of Tishah B'Av, or the de-intensification of the other fast days.

The latter approach is expressed by the Ramban.¹⁵ He discusses the passage in the Talmud which seeks to contextualize the promise of Zechariah¹⁶ that the fast days which address the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash would ultimately be observed as festivals. Three categories emerge from that passage: a) in a time of "shalom", these days will be considered festivals; b) in a time characterized as "*shmad*", or destructive persecution, they will retain their character as fast days; c) in an era that is neither shalom nor *shmad*, the days will be optional fast days. However, this last category does not apply to Tishah B'Av; because of its aforementioned severity, it is either a fast day or a festival, but never a day of optional observance.

Accordingly, posits the Ramban, this passage accounts for the distinction in severity. As we are no longer enduring active *shmad*, in his formulation, the fast days are of optional status. Were this not to be the case, they too would be observed as 24 hour fasts, with all five prohibited benefits; this is the biblical model of a fast day. However, since the Jewish people are observing these days voluntarily, they are given the discretion to modify them to more manageable models, and thus observe them in the more lenient format, fasting only during the daytime hours, and then only abstaining from food and drink.¹⁷ Tishah B'Av, however, has no optional category, and thus maintains its default, intense nature¹⁸.

Many, including the Netziv,¹⁹ disputed this analysis, and asserted that the other fast days were always at their current level of intensity (arguing that the Bible contains more than one model of a fast day)²⁰ and that Tishah B'Av is not the default but rather the result of intensification.²¹

If one assumed that this is indeed the case, another question still remains: what is the nature of this intensification? Once again, at least two possibilities emerge. One possibility, favored by the Netziv, who cites the Behag, takes note of the fact that many of the added elements on Tishah B'Av are common to another area of Jewish law, namely the observance of *aveilut*. As such, it seems that Tishah B'Av is characterized as a fast day that is merged with practices of mourning,

¹⁵ In his *Torat haAdam*, cited in Ran to *Rosh HaShanah*, 4b in pages of the Rif, s.v. *v'd'amrinan*.

¹⁶ Zechariah 8:19.

¹⁷ See *Responsa Ketav Sofer*, O.C. 100, and *Responsa Teshuvot VeHanhagot*, IV, 121.

¹⁸ The assumption that the contemporary status of the other three fast days is of a lesser obligation than it had been originally is endorsed by *Responsa Mishkenot Ya'akov*, O.C. 149; however, note the language of the Rambam in *Hilkhot Ta'anuyot* 5;2-4. See also R. Shmuel David, in the journal *Barkai*, III, p. 86-93; *Responsa Chemdah Genuzah*, I, 22; and *Ginzei Chaim*, O.C. 551:1:1.

¹⁹ *He'amek She'alah* #158.

²⁰ Another major point of contention is the assumption that the status of *shmad* is no longer applicable; see *Responsa Minchat Elazar*, IV, 5.

²¹ See also *Torah Temimah*, Vayikra 18, #14, and compare Ritva, *Ta'anit* 30b with *Be'ur HaGra*, O.C. 686.

in that it is the "yahrtzeit" of the Beit HaMikdash, and the stringencies flow from this hybrid nature.

Alternatively, it can be noted that many of the additional elements of Tishah B'Av are common to yet another observance, namely, Yom HaKippurim; indeed, the *Sefer HaChinukh*²² groups the two together. Accordingly, it might be suggested that Tishah B'Av derives its severity from being an enhanced fast day, a day that is not merely a commemoration but one that has its basic character - at this point, a negative one - inherent in the day itself. Such a formulation would emerge from the recognition of Tishah B'Av as a "day prepared for disasters", a date colored by tragedy from the time of the acceptance of the report of the *meraglim*, when G-d declared He would establish "crying for the generations" on the day the nation cried without justification.²³ This inherent negativity creates a sort of "inverted festival", similar in strength to the biblical festivals but possessing (currently) an opposite character.

As R. Eliyahu Levine²⁴ notes, it is possible to locate these two approaches in the aforementioned explanations of *Tosafot* for Tishah B'Av's severity. The notion that the "multiplicity" refers to the intense tragedy of the Beit HaMikdash implies that the focus is on our current state of mourning for that loss. Alternatively, the suggestion that the severity comes from the same event repeating itself presents the issue as the creation of a pattern, suggesting that the day has some inherent aspect that results in negative events, even the same event, occurring repeatedly.²⁵

Some Possible Implications of the Question

Once these two possible intensifiers have been identified, they can be perceived as underpinning a number of discussions regarding the laws and concepts of Tishah B'Av.

²² *Mitzvah* 313.

²³ *Ta'anit* 29a.

²⁴ *Divrei Shirah: Bein HaMeitzarim* #6.

²⁵ Another interesting application of these two possibilities can be found in R. Nachum Eisenstein's work *Avnei Shoham* (pp. 142-145) addressing the passage in the Talmud (*Megillah* 5a) which relates that Rebbe wanted to "uproot" Tishah B'Av. The *Tosafot*, astonished that Rebbe would wish to ignore such a crucial day, offer two alternative suggestions: either he wished to modify and de-intensify the day, thus equating it to other fast days; or he wanted to move it to the 10th of Av, thus sharing the view of R. Yochanan (*Ta'anit* 29a) that the 10th is a more appropriate date, as most of the Beit HaMikdash burned on that day. As the *Turei Even* and the Vilna Gaon note, this second suggestion is particularly difficult to reconcile with the original Talmudic passage, which itself challenges the viability of Rebbe's position, and softens it with a different suggestion: the context was a year when Tishah B'Av fell out on Shabbat, and thus was pushed off to Sunday, and the proposal was that once it cannot be observed on its appropriate day, let it be left out completely that year. It thus emerges that according to *Tosafot*, Rebbe wanted the day to always be observed on the 10th, but when that indeed happened because the 9th was on Shabbat, he wanted it cancelled completely! *Avnei Shoham* addresses this apparent contradiction by suggesting that Rebbe and his colleagues argued as to the driving force of the added intensity of Tishah B'Av. Rebbe felt it was *aveilut*; thus, the 10th was a more appropriate choice, as that was the day of the most loss. His colleagues, by contrast, focused on the importance of the calendaric date, the ongoing inherent negativity of the 9th of Av. Thus, *Tosafot's* suggestions may be read as follows: Rebbe was arguing that, in his view, the 10th should always be the date of the observance, to properly host the *aveilut*. If it is instead to be the 9th, two conclusions can be drawn: a) Tishah B'Av should be no more intense than other commemorative fast days; and b) the observance is not portable – if it cannot take place on the actual calendaric date, there is no option of moving it to a different day.

One such area is the situation that occurs when, as it is this year, the 9th of Av falls on Shabbat. In that circumstance, the fast is observed on Sunday. This practice necessitates a conceptual question: is Tishah B'Av actually moved, uprooted in totality from its eponymous date and relocated to the 10th of Av? If Tishah B'Av is an observance of mourning, it may be portable; indeed, the practice of *shivah* is routinely delayed when it would otherwise begin on a festival. Or, perhaps we should maintain that this is impossible in the case of Tishah B'Av; the occasion is inextricably linked to the date, and cannot be moved. Nonetheless, fasting is prohibited on Shabbat, and therefore will not happen on that day, with a fast scheduled for the following day as a replacement.²⁶

This analytical question affects a number of included issues:

A) While fasting is prohibited, there are some observances that are compatible with Shabbat, i.e. those that are categorized as non-public mourning. Whether or not these are in effect on Shabbat that is the 9th of Av is the topic of debate among the early authorities, with Rabbenu Yitzchak taking a stringent position and the Maharam Rotenberg and the Rosh maintaining a lenient one.²⁷

Similarly, Torah study is prohibited on Tishah B'Av, with an extension into the prior afternoon. There are a number of views as to the required practice when Tishah B'Av is on Shabbat, including: the suspension of the prohibition on Shabbat itself; the application of the prohibition on that day; and the treatment of Shabbat as *Erev Tishah B'Av* for this purpose.²⁸

B) There is a discussion, as well, concerning a minor who attains adulthood on the 10th of Av in such a year. Apparently, the first day of his obligation in *mitzvot* is a fast day. However, technically speaking, a case can be made that the fast day is only a replacement for the fast necessitated by the occasion of the previous day; as this new *bar* or *bat mitzvah* was not yet obligated at that point, he or she is similarly exempt from making up the responsibility the next day.²⁹

C) This question also impacts the observance of the days prior to Tishah B'Av. The entire three week period between the 17th of Tammuz and Tishah B'Av has a status reflective of sadness and mourning; however, particular intensity is given to the week in which *Tishah B'Av* takes place, known as "*Shavuah SheChal Bo*". When Tishah B'Av is on *Shabbat*, there are two completely

²⁶ See the discussions in *Responsa Emek HaTeshuvah*, III, 43; *Responsa Chukkei Chaim*, I, 43; and *Responsa Divrei Shlomo* (R. Shlomo Schneider), II, 72.

²⁷ See *Tur* O.C. 554, and the debate between the *Shulchan Arukh* and the Rama in 554:19. See also R. Yitzchak Hutner's comments in *Sefer Zikaron LeMaran Ba'al HaPachad Yitzchak*, #24.

²⁸ See *Magen Avraham* O.C. 553:7 and *Taz* #2, and *Responsa Chatam Sofer* O.C. 156; *Responsa Ketav Sofer* O.C. 101; *Responsa Siach Yitzchak* #250; *Responsa Divrei Yisrael*, II, *likutei teshuvot* 17; *Responsa Shevet HaLevi* VI, 70; and *Responsa Divrei Yatziv* YD 241. See also *Responsa Maharam Lublin* 99; *Responsa Meged Yehudah*, Y.D. 36:8; the journal *Ohr Torah (Kol Aryeh)*, III, 106; *Responsa Minchat David* II, 90; IV, 47 and 48; and *Responsa VaYevarekh David* 77, as well as more generally, *Responsa Even Pinah* I, 46 and 47, and *Responsa Shema Yisrael*, 82.

²⁹ See *Responsa Rashba* I, 520; *Responsa Maharsham* III, 363; *Responsa Machaneh Chaim*, 33; *Responsa Yad Sofer*, 7 (and see also #54); *Responsa LeHorot Natan* V, 33-36; *Responsa Hittorerut Teshuvah* III, 353; *Responsa Moznei Tzedek*, I, 55 and 57; *Responsa Shevet HaLevi* IV 72:2; *Responsa Avnei Nezer*, O.C. 426; *Da'at Torah*, 252; *Responsa Afarkasta D'Anyah*, II, 83.

opposite ways to understand how this concept should be observed. Either it is assumed that Shabbat, actually, is Tishah B'Av, rendering the entire previous week *Shavuah SheChal Bo* (the longest possible observance); or it is understood that Tishah B'Av has actually been moved to Sunday, which would eliminate the status of *Shavuah SheChal Bo* that year, as there are no days in that week prior to Tishah B'Av.³⁰

Differences Between the *Aveilut* & *Yom HaKippurim* Models

The question of whether the additional elements of Tishah B'Av are more comparable to aspects of *aveilut* or of Yom HaKippurim is also relevant because there are subtle differences in application between the two. One such difference regards the prohibition of bathing. The *Minchat Chinukh*³¹ notes that a mourner may bathe in cold water,³² while this is prohibited on Tishah B'Av, due to an equation to the rules of Yom HaKippurim.³³ Another difference may be found in relation to the prohibition of anointing with oils, which appears to be the subject of a debate between the Talmud Yerushalmi,³⁴ which allows the usage of oils to remove a blemish, and the Talmud Bavli,³⁵ which does not acknowledge any such exemption when considering differences between Yom HaKippurim and Tishah B'Av. As R. Chanoch Eigish explains in his *Sefer Marcheshet*,³⁶ the Bavli seems to be understanding the additional aspects of Tishah B'Av to derive from an equation to Yom HaKippurim, while the Yerushalmi sees them as emanating from *aveilut*.

Should *Tishah B'Av* be shorter, or longer?

Further relevance may be found in two questions, opposite in nature, regarding the length of Tishah B'Av. The first, which involved the premise that *Tishah B'Av* should be foreshortened, is posed in a question to R. Hai Gaon. In the practice of personal *aveilut*, there is a concept known as "*miktzat ha-yom ke-kulo*" ("a portion of the day is considered as the whole day") which results, for example, in the last day of *shivah* ending immediately after the morning has begun. Why, then, should the same not apply to the public mourning of Tishah B'Av, allowing Tishah B'Av to end in the morning, rather than after dark so many hours later? R. Hai Gaon offered three possible answers: a) since Tishah B'Av should have actually extended into the 10th of Av, when the Beit HaMikdash continued to burn, it already benefits from shortening; b) the observances of Tishah B'Av do not emanate from *aveilut*, but rather from the laws of the fast day; c)

³⁰ See the debate brought in the *Tur*, O.C. 551 and *Beit Yosef*. s.v. *V'im chal Tishah B'Av*; see also *Responsa Mevasser Tov*, II, 132, *Responsa Rivvevot Ephraim* II, 155:11; *Responsa Kinyan Torah BeHalakhah* III, 71; *Responsa Even Pinah*, I, 48; *Responsa LeHorot Natan* V:33 and 35; *Responsa Divrei Pinchas* 2; *Responsa Perach Shoshanah*, 90 (and see that author's article in the journal *HaDarom*, XXVII., pp. 67-69).

³¹ 313:11.

³² *Moed Katan* 15b; Y.D. 381:1.

³³ Note the different approach of the Brisker Rav in *Chiddushei Maran Riz HaLevi, Hilkhos Taaniyot*, p. 20; see also *Tiferet Torah*, #15, and *Masa Yad*, III, p. 179-180.

³⁴ *Yoma* 8:1.

³⁵ *Pesachim* 53b

³⁶ Vol. I, 42:10.

shortening the day would be appropriate only for some elements of Tishah B'Av and not for others, and it would be unfeasible to have *Tishah B'Av* partially end early and partially continue. Rav Soloveitchik³⁷ observed that these three responses reflect three possibilities in how to understand the additional elements of Tishah B'Av: a) they derive from *aveilut* (and thus *miktzat hayom* should have theoretically applied); b) they derive from something other than *aveilut* (and thus *miktzat hayom* is not applicable³⁸); and c) there is a combination of influences involved.

The opposite possibility, that Tishah B'Av should be lengthened, may emerge from a different discussion. The Talmud (*Pesachim* 54b) debates the status of “*bein hashemashot*” of Tishah B'Av. In the case of Shabbat and biblically mandated festivals, the day begins the previous night; and since the twilight period is of indeterminate status, it is considered night as a stringency appropriate to biblical law. In the case of Tishah B'Av, it is less obvious that this should be the case, as Tishah B'Av is not commanded by the Torah, and one might be justified in assuming the lenient approach should be taken and twilight should not be included in Tishah B'Av. Nonetheless, the practice, as codified by the Rambam,³⁹ is to take the stringent position and include *bein hashemashot* as a part of *Tishah B'Av*.

One possible explanation is to view Tishah B'Av, since it sourced in Scripture (albeit post-Pentateuchal) and thus termed “*Divrei Kaballah*”, as comparable to Torah law in terms of severity.⁴⁰ Others, however, assume the inclusion of the twilight period is for the purposes of “*Tosefet*”, the extending of the day applicable to Shabbat and festivals.⁴¹

It emerges, then, that there is a dispute as to whether the concept of *tosefet* is relevant to Tishah B'Av. This would seem to revolve around the question of whether the dominant model is a “Yom HaKippurim model” or an “*aveilut* model”. If the latter is the case, *aveilut* is not subject to expansion; quite the opposite, it is generally minimized, as seen above in regards to *miktzat hayom ke-kulo*. However, if Yom HaKippurim is the model, then *tosefet* is appropriate; in fact, the basic concept of *tosefet* is derived in the context of Yom HaKippurim.⁴²

A similar question can be asked regarding the obligation to train a minor, not yet responsible for *mitzvot*, in the observance of Tishah B'Av. On the one hand, practices of *aveilut* are generally not subject to the imperative of *chinukh* (training). Alternatively, if Tishah B'Av is to be compared to Yom HaKippurim, that day is included within *chinukh*, with the *Mishnah*⁴³ recommending that minors begin fasting a year or two prior to obligation.⁴⁴

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³⁷ Cited in the journal *Mesorah*, vol. 6.

³⁸ The contemporary practice of applying *miktzat hayom* only to *aveilut* is the subject of a longer discussion outside the scope of this treatment.

³⁹ *Hilkhot Ta'aniyot* 7:2.

⁴⁰ Per the general approach of the *Turei Even*, *Megillah* 5b, s.v. *Chizkiyah*. See *Maggid Mishnah* and *Responsa Chazon Nachum* (*Tosefet Shvi'it*, 67).

⁴¹ See *Sefat Emet* to *Pesachim* and *Responsa Shem MiShimon*, O.C. 24.

⁴² *Rosh HaShanah* 9a.

⁴³ *Yoma* 81b.

⁴⁴ See *Responsa Mevasser Tov*, II, 132.

Another arena in which to study the nature of Tishah B'Av may be that of the Torah reading for the day. On a regular fast day, the Torah is read both in the morning and afternoon, and both times the reading is “*Vayichal*” (*Shemot* 32:11-14 and 34:1-10). On Tishah B'Av, however, *Vayichal* is read in the afternoon, but the morning reading is “*Ki Tolid Banim*” (*Devarim* 4:25-40). R. Ya'akov Betzalel Zolty, in his *Mishnat Ya'avetz*,⁴⁵ poses the question of how to understand the morning reading. On the one hand, it may be that it is a standard fast day Torah reading, despite the fact that the selection is different. Alternatively, perhaps the Torah reading is not because of the fast day, but is rather in honor of the “festival” of Tishah B'Av; just as every festival includes a Torah reading relevant to its theme, perhaps Tishah B'Av does as well.⁴⁶

As a practical application of the question, R. Zolty invokes a similar question posed by R. Akiva Eiger⁴⁷ regarding the afternoon reading on Yom HaKippurim, when *Vayichal* is again replaced with another selection. In that discussion, it is assumed that if the reading is characterized as an aspect of the fast, then one who is not fasting, e.g., one who is ill, would not be entitled to receive an *aliyah*. However, if the reading is in honor of the festival, even one who is not fasting may participate. However, this ramification is disputed, as there are a number of authorities who ruled that an *aliyah* may be given regardless, even to one who is not fasting.⁴⁸

Conclusion

It emerges from the above that the intensity of Tishah B'Av may be drawn from at least two possible sources (or a combination of both): either the grafting of *aveilut* onto a fast day, or the fact that the day is a “*mo'ed*”, a “festival” of inherent significance, which infuses the day with additional weight. There is, at present, an irony in that term, as *mo'ed* is a word usually connotative of joy and celebration. However, the irony is temporary: the day is destined to transform into one that does full justice to the definition. That reality, though, is contingent on the first possibility: allowing the mourning to be given its full expression is the very act that will activate the festive nature of the day: “All who mourn for Jerusalem, will merit and see in its comfort.”⁴⁹ Through our efforts to properly understand and internalize the concepts of the day as practiced currently, we hope to soon realize the prophet's promise that this day too “shall become times of joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts to the house of *Yehudah*”.

⁴⁵ O.C. 49.

⁴⁶ See also *Birkat Kohen al haTorah* (#142). Regarding the Torah reading on the fast days in general, see *Responsa Imrei Avraham*, I, 22.

⁴⁷ *Responsa* I, 25; see also *Marcheshet*, I, 14; *Responsa Divrei Yisrael* II, *likkutei teshuvot* 105; *Responsa Shavei Tziyon*, 21; and the journal *Mesorah*, VII, pp. 19-21 and p. 24.

⁴⁸ See *Responsa Chatam Sofer* O.C. 157; *Minhag Yisrael Torah* 135:4; *Responsa Maharil Diskin, kuntres acharon* 5:7; *Responsa Divrei Shlomo* (Schneider) I, 50; *Responsa Even Pinah* I, 50; *Responsa Divrei Yatziv* O.C. 246; *Responsa Minchat Aharon*, I, 227, and *Keter Ephraim*, 29. See also *Responsa Minchat David*, I:64:94, regarding one who is wearing leather shoes on Yom HaKippurim.

⁴⁹ *Ta'anit* 30b.

“Said Rabbi Shimon: When I went to Rome, There I saw the Menorah...”

Some Personal Reflections on the YU Center for Israel
Studies’ Arch of Titus Digital Restoration Project

Dr. Steven Fine

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Some 1850 years ago, the midrash tells us,⁵⁰ Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai (*Rashbi*) —student of Rabbi Aqiva and compatriot of Rabbis Yehuda bar Ilai, Meir, Eleazar and Yose, set out for Rome on one of those periodic rabbinic excursions to the center of the Empire. While there, he may have visited the Temple of Peace on the Roman Forum and there seen the Menorah. This temple was a kind of museum dedicated to the greatness of Rome by the Emperor Vespasian to commemorate his victory in the Jewish War of 66-74 CE, culminating in the destruction of the Temple on Tisha be-Av in the year 70

CE. This is where the Menorah was put on public display at the conclusion of the war.

What did Rabbi Shimon see? Josephus, the Jewish historian, describes the triumphal parade celebrating Titus’s victory, emphasizing for his Roman audience the booty brought to Rome from Herod’s Temple:

The spoils in general were borne in promiscuous heaps; but conspicuous above all stood those captured in the temple at Jerusalem.

These consisted of a golden table, many talents in weight, and a lampstand, likewise made of gold, but constructed on a different pattern than those which we use in ordinary life. Affixed to a pedestal was a central shaft, from which there extended slender branches, arranged trident-fashion, a wrought lamp being attached to the extremity of

⁵⁰ Sifre Zutta on Numbers (ed. H. S. Horowitz, Jerusalem, 1966), *Be-haalotkha* 255. Many thanks to Leah Bierman Fine and to Yitzchak Schwartz and for their assistance in preparing this essay.

each branch, of these there were seven, indicating the honor paid to that number among the Jews.

After these, and last of all the spoils, was carried a copy of the Jewish Law [the Torah].

They followed a large party carrying images of victory, all made of ivory and gold. Behind them drove Vespasian, followed by Titus; while Domitian rode beside them, in magnificent apparel and mounted on a steed that was in itself a sight (Jewish War 7, 148ff).

This scene was immortalized by Titus' brother, Domitian, a decade later (81 CE) in the infamous Arch of Titus. There we see ten Roman soldiers—celebratory wreaths on their heads, carrying into Rome the Menorah and the *Shulkhan*, “the table of showbread,” as well as the *Hatsotsrot*, the horns once sounded in the Temple. The Menorah and the other vessels remained in the Temple of Peace until they were likely taken by the Vandals during the sack of Rome in the fifth century.

For centuries, Jews avoided the Arch of Titus, refusing to walk under it and thus to give honor to Titus. The Arch symbolized the debasement of Judaism and the beginning of our woes. This situation was reinforced by the Church, for which the Arch came to symbolize the transfer of Divine authority from Jerusalem to the Church of Rome, and with it, the Divine punishment imposed upon the Jews for rejecting Jesus. Things began to change in the modern world. From the nineteenth century on, Jews came to see the Arch's Menorah in a much more positive light, as a symbol for Judaism. For Jewish traditionalists and Zionists, its unique form symbolized a hope for national restoration in the Land of Israel. The only “archaeologically accurate” representation of the Temple vessels then known, the Arch was reimagined as a Jewish treasure and a link to a glorious past. Jews reproduced the Arch of Titus Menorah within synagogues and many other communal contexts. After long deliberation, in 1949, the Arch of Titus Menorah was chosen as the symbol for the new State of Israel. Bringing the Menorah “home,” at least figuratively, Israeli authors and artists saw the Menorah as a metaphor for the entire Jewish people, and its reappropriation as Israel's national symbol as part of the “ingathering of exiles” that the new State saw as its mission.⁵¹

Since childhood, I have been fascinated by the Torah's detailed description of the Menorah. Unlike more distant biblical objects, like the Ark of the Covenant or the Temple itself, the biblical Menorah was familiar—we, like most people, had a big bronze one in our synagogue! This fascination only grew with time. From middle school through my doctorate and ever since, I have written about the Menorah in one way or another—its form, its meaning, new discoveries, and representations of the Menorah in Jewish texts. A particularly fascinating liturgical poem (*piyyut*) imagines that the Menorah was cast in gold in three shades of color: red, white



The author standing opposite the Arch of Titus' depiction of the Menorah.

⁵¹ This history is masterfully related by team member Alec Mishory in his *Lo and Behold: Zionist Icons and Visual Symbols in Israeli Culture* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2000), 138-96, in Hebrew. An abbreviated translation appears at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/emblem.html>.

and green.⁵² Lecturing on the Menorah to Jews across the spectrum-- from Reform to Chassidic—audience members told me with absolute surety that the Menorah is “hidden” at the Vatican. In fact, it isn’t. As a result, though, I began to wonder what Hazal and the *Rishonim* tell us about its whereabouts-- especially since no one before the 1950’s made this claim. I became fascinated with tracing the extent of this very modern urban myth, and why so many contemporary Jews want to believe it.

Recently, while participating in a project based at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts on polychromy- the coloring of statues in the Greco-Roman world,⁵³ it occurred to me that it might just be possible to determine the original colors of the Menorah of the Arch of Titus. The study of color on ancient art is still a new discipline. We as a culture have become so used to imagining Roman art in bold white marble, that the idea that it was painted is sometimes shocking. Painted, though, it was; and through computer scanning techniques developed over the past decade, it is now possible to find flakes of ancient color.⁵⁴ If color is possible on other Roman statues and buildings, would it be possible to find it on the Arch of Titus? Perhaps studying the Arch for traces of its original coloring would allow us to reconstruct what the colors of the Temple vessels looked like, and bring us that much closer to the experience of “seeing” that ancients experienced when they saw the Arch of Titus and its Menorah!

Most scholars will tell you that behind their attempts at objective scholarship, we are animated by deep personal interest and curiosity. I often sense my own desire to “see” the Menorah as Josephus and Rabbi Shimon did as a spiritual pilgrimage, one that places me in a long line of pilgrims and seekers in search of our holy objects. The difference is, of course, that my search makes use of the most recent and advanced technology and the newest insights drawn from the field of art history for the interpretation of Roman art. For me, this is an exercise in *Torah u-Madda*—what



The Menorah and other holy vessels of the Second Temple carried by Roman soldiers into Rome.

⁵² See my *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 146-63.

⁵³ “Was This Roman Sculpture of Gaius Caligula Painted?” *Biblical History Digest*, 10/27/2011, posted at www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/artifacts-and-the-bible/was-this-roman-sculpture-of-gaius-caligula-painted/

⁵⁴ To learn more about ancient polychromy, visit: www.ancientartpodcast.org/SCARABsolutions/Resources/Resources_files/Gods%20in%20Color%20Gallery%20Guide%20Arthur%20M%20Sackler%20Museum%20Harvard.pdf

I hope is a harmonious synergy of my own traditionalist piety and the best of contemporary culture. While the method and presentation of the results is strictly academic, and even my question derives and is framed in terms of contemporary studies of color in Roman art, deep, deep down my personal impetus is to “see” the Menorah.

It is hard to express my sense of excitement, almost awe, as I came to the Arch on Tuesday morning, June 8 and saw “my” scaffolding, a project of the YU Center for Israel Studies, going up in front of the reliefs. On that morning, our team of scholars and conservators—Italians, Germans and Americans, assembled at the Arch to begin our search for the original colors of the sculptural reliefs—a first step toward the total digital reconstruction of the Arch of Titus.

Climbing up the scaffolding to the level of the Menorah and the *Shulkhan* I could not take my eyes off the carving—which was less than two feet from me. Looking, staring, examining and photographing, I must have been up there a very long time, because the team that had come from Milan to scan the images at some point reminded me that they had to get to work! I hung the blue and white YU banner from the scaffolding, and one phrase kept ringing through my ears, one with roots in Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones and appears in the Israeli anthem *Hatiqva—od lo avda tiqvatenu*—“our hope is not yet lost.”

The world expert on the use of technology for the study of polychromy, Heinrich Piening, set to work. Within hours, the tentative results flashed across his laptop. Flakes of yellow ochre were found on the Menorah, in a number of locations. The Arch of Titus Menorah panel was painted, and the Menorah was the color of gold! When Jews, perhaps including Rabbi Shimon, visited in the second century they could see the real Menorah in the Temple of Peace. Coming to the nearby Arch of Titus, they could imagine the scene when it was taken “captive” by the “evil empire.” Commemorated in stone to express the greatness of Vespasian, Titus, and of Rome itself, our ancestors could “see” our national tragedy expressed in graphic detail. What they saw was a colorful array of images.



Heinrich Piening, a conservator from Munich, Germany, testing for evidence for ancient color on the Menorah. He found fragments of yellow ochre pigment.

We now know that the Arch of Titus Menorah was indeed painted a golden yellow. What, though, of the *Shulkhan*? What color were the Temple horns painted? In the next phases of this project, we will find out. Everyone will be able to see the Temple vessels as Rabbi Shimon might have; as the Jews of ancient Rome did, as they waited for the return of the sacred objects to the Holy Temple. These Jews mourned our Temple with visions of its gold before their eyes. May the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days, and may we all experience the glow of the golden Menorah in Jerusalem restored—this time eternally.

To learn more about the YU Arch of Titus Digital Restoration Project, to view a slide show about our work and for regular updates, visit yu.edu/cis/activities/arch-of-titus/

Failure to Grieve

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rosh Beit Midrash, Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash of Toronto

אם אשכחך ירושלים תשכח ימיני

If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its strength. (Tehillim 137:5)

How could a righteous Jew fail to mourn for Jerusalem?

Our Sages⁵⁵ found no shortage of religious causes for the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, blaming the population for dishonesty, disrespect, violation of Shabbat and much more.

However, just one explanation is brought for the fall of another Jewish community, Kfar Sakhnia, and that explanation is most perplexing:

Rav Manyumi bar Chilkiyah, Rav Chilkiyah bar Tuvyah and Rav Huna bar Chiyya were sitting together, and they said: If anyone knows something of Kfar Sakhnia in Egypt⁵⁶, let him speak. [One then told of a captive betrothed couple from Kfar Sakhnia who refused to touch each other without halachic marriage. The two others told of the community's commitment to justice.] Abbaye asked Rav Yosef: If they were so righteous, why were they punished? Rav Yosef explained: It is because they did not mourn for Jerusalem, as it is written, 'Be glad with Jerusalem and rejoice in her, all who love her; rejoice with her, all who mourn for her.'

Gittin 57a

רב מניומי בר חלקיה ורב חלקיה בר טוביה ורב חייא הוו יתבי גבי הדדי אמרי אי איכא דשמיע ליה מילתא מכפר סכניא של מצרים לימא... א"ל אביי לרב יוסף ומאחר דהוו צדיקים כולי האי מאי טעמא איענוש א"ל משום דלא איבול על ירושלים דכתיב (ישעיהו ס"ו) שמחו את ירושלים וגילו בה כל אוהביה שישו אתה משוש כל המתאבלים עליה

גיטין נז.

This seems an overly harsh punishment for a community credited with absolute righteousness in both ritual and social matters. Indeed, Maharal was troubled by this; after attributing the fall of Tur Malka to this same flaw, he explained that their downfall was more logical consequence than it was punishment:

Because Tur Malka was not concerned for Jerusalem, to mourn for Jerusalem, they were destroyed as well. For how could they endure, when they were not concerned for that which enabled them to endure? When the body is separated from the heart, the heart enables the person to endure and so the body does not endure. Therefore, when they did not mourn for Jerusalem, which is like a heart for the body, with Beitar and Tur Malka as the two arms, then they were destroyed.

Maharal, Chiddushei Aggadot to Gittin 57a

ומאחר שלא חשו בטור מלכא לירושלים להתאבל על ירושלים נחרבו גם הם, כי איך יהיה קיום להם אחר שאין חוששין על דבר שהוא קיומם, שכאשר הגוף נחלק מן הלב שהלב הוא קיום של אדם ואז אין קיום לגוף, ולפיכך כאשר לא היו מתאבלים על ירושלים שהיא דומה כמו הלב אל הגוף, וביתר וטור מלכא הם שני זרועות, ולכך נחרבו

מהר"ל חידושי אגדות, גיטין נז.

⁵⁵ See *Shabbat* 119b, *Chagigah* 14a, and *Bava Metzia* 30b, for example.

⁵⁶ There is some debate as to the true location of Kfar Sakhnia.

Maharal's explanation only shifts the question, though: If failure to mourn for Jerusalem was so obviously wrong, how could this righteous community fail to grieve? Indeed, Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Lessin contended that they did mourn, but on a level which was not adequate to their spiritual standing.⁵⁷ Others, though, identified specific weaknesses which underlay an actual failure to grieve for the suffering of their brethren in Jerusalem.

Approach 1: Indifference

One approach, based in the words of the Maharal, is to suggest it was a matter of indifference; they did not believe that the fall of Jerusalem would affect their lives, and so they failed to mourn:

Because of the blessing they experienced, they felt only joy. Mourning for Jerusalem would have been appropriate, but they did not do so...

כי מכח הברכה שהיה שם לא היה להם רק שמחה, ולפיכך אף כאשר ראוי להתאבל על ירושלים לא היה זה...

This charge against Kfar Sakhnia is similar to that of Yirmiyahu against the Jews of his day⁵⁸ and the Talmud against the general Jewish population of the time,⁵⁹ describing them as oblivious to the import of invasion, living in the fearless belief that tomorrow would be identical to today. Kfar Sakhnia never understood what it meant to lose Jerusalem – even as their own community became a center for heretics and early Christians.⁶⁰

Rabbi Yaakov Emden identified the same phenomenon in his own eighteenth century era, and he echoed the Talmudic condemnation:

Now no one pays attention, wishing to love her, seeking her peace and welfare, longing to see her. In our peace in exile, it appears as though we have already found another Israel, another Jerusalem like her. This is why all of the bad events befall us.

If just this sin of failing to mourn Jerusalem properly was on our hands, that would suffice to extend our exile. In my eyes it is the most obvious, greatest and most powerful immediate cause for all of the great, terrible, frightening destructions which have found us in exile. Wherever we have scattered, they have been at our throats, never letting us rest among the nations, in lowliness and suffering and poverty, because this mourning left our heart when we were settled in lands not our own. We forgot Jerusalem; she never entered our thoughts.

Siddur of Rabbi Yaakov Emden, Introduction to Laws of Tishah b'Av

כי עתה אין שם על לב מבקש אהבתה דורש שלומה וטובתה ולא מצפה לראותה כמדומה לנו בהיותינו בשלוח בחו"ל שכבר מצאנו ארץ ישראל אחרת וירושלים אחרת דוגמתה על כן באו עלינו כל הרעות אלמלא לא היה אלא עון זה בידינו שאין מתאבלין על ירושלים כראוי די להאריך גלותינו והיא בעיני הסיבה קרובה היותר גלויה עצומה וחזקה לכל השמדות הגדולות הנוראות המבהילות הרעיונים אשר מצאנו בגלות, בכל מקומות פזורינו על צוארנו נרדפנו לא הונח לנו להרגיע בגוים עם שפלותינו ענינו ומרודנו לפי שיצא האבל הלז מלבנו בהיותנו שוקטים בארץ לא לנו שכחנו את ירושלים ולא עלתה על לבבינו **סידור של ר' יעקב עמדין - פתיחה להל' תשעה באב**

⁵⁷ HaMaor sheb'Torah, העונש והאדם.

⁵⁸ Yirmiyahu 7:4.

⁵⁹ Talmud, Gittin 55b.

⁶⁰ Talmud, Avodah Zarah 17a, 27b.

Approach 2: Jealousy

The charge of indifference rings true in our world, in which the ubiquity of inquiries to rabbis regarding attending sporting events and circuses during *bein hametzarim* suggests a Jewish world which lacks awareness of its own loss. However, it is difficult to imagine such ignorance in the world of two thousand years ago, when the sacking of Jerusalem meant the disappearance of the Beit haMikdash, korbanot and the better part of the Sanhedrin's authority, all pillars of institutional Jewish life. Could the righteous Jews of Kfar Sakhnia have been so blind as to miss this impact?

Maharsha offered a different approach, viewing Kfar Sakhnia's attitude as less insouciant and more hostile:

Because the hands of the people of Jerusalem were upon other cities in various matters, in wisdom and in pilgrimage for holidays, as seen in Eichah Rabti, people hated them, and they were not pained by the fall of Jerusalem.

Maharsha, Chiddushei Aggadot to Gittin 57a

לפי שהיו אנשי ירושלים ידם על שאר עיירות
בכמה דברים בחכמה ובעלייתן לרגל כדאיתא
באיכה רבתי ע"כ היו שונאין אותן ולא נצטערו
על מפלת ירושלים
מהרש"א חש"א גיטין נז.

This accusation is difficult to comprehend today, though. We are told of Cuthite hatred of Jerusalem, stemming from centuries of animosity,⁶¹ and we are familiar with jealousy of one human being for another, but how could a righteous Jew harbor hatred for Jerusalem on the basis of its religious authority and political primacy?

Approach 3: Religious Insensitivity

Rabbi Shlomo ben Rabbi Avraham Binyamin Kluger, grandson of the great Rabbi of Brod and better-known as Rabbi Shlomo Kluger, offered a third explanation for the inadequacy of Kfar Sakhnia's grief: Religious Insensitivity.

As we mentioned at the outset, the sages offered numerous explanations for the Divine wrath evinced in the destruction of Jerusalem. For example:

Rabbi Avahu said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they stopped reciting Shema in the morning and evening... Rav Hemnuna said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they kept the children from learning Torah... Ulla said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they lacked shame before each other... Rabbi Yitzchak said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they equated the small and the great... Rav Amram, son of Rabbi Shimon bar Abba, cited Rabbi Shimon bar Abba citing Rabbi Chanina: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they did not rebuke each other... Rabbi Yehudah said:

אמר רבי אבהו לא חרבה ירושלים אלא
בשביל שביטלו קריאת שמע שחרית
וערבית... אמר רב המנונא לא חרבה
ירושלים אלא בשביל שביטלו בה תינוקות
של בית רבן... אמר עולא לא חרבה
ירושלים אלא מפני שלא היה להם בושת
פנים זה מזה... אמר רבי יצחק לא חרבה
ירושלים אלא בשביל שהושוו קטן וגדול...
אמר רב עמרם בריה דרבי שמעון בר אבא
אמר רבי שמעון בר אבא אמר רבי חנינא
לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שלא
הוכיחו זה את זה... אמר רבי יהודה לא

⁶¹ Rambam, Commentary to Mishnah, *Nedarim* 3:8.

Jerusalem was destroyed only because they mocked Torah scholars... Rava said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because trustworthy people disappeared...

Shabbat 119b

These lessons are important; citing the words of Yeshayah and Yirmiyah, the Sages' rebukes pinpoint sins which did trigger destruction, and so they furnish a critical "to do" list for redemption. However, in closely linking human pain with human guilt, these lessons also offer onlookers the opportunity to turn away from that human pain. Even as people who are approached for aid with finances might respond, "Why don't you get a job," or people approached for aid with medical bills might respond, "Quit smoking," the Jews of Kfar Sakhnia could respond to the suffering of Jerusalemites by saying, "It is a Divine decree; accept it with love, repent, and the suffering will end."

As Rabbi Kluger expressed it:

When a person suffers tragedy which only afflicts him and his flesh, then anyone who has awe of G-d within him... is obligated to accept the Divine verdict as just and to bless for the bad as he does for the good. This is the path of a person who walks righteously, to suffer all ailments that come upon him with a calm spirit...

But if harm comes upon a person and upon others... then that person, who may even suffer more than others, may not calm himself and avoid feeling the pain of others... saying that he accepts it upon himself with love. This is a repugnant trait and an ugly path; one may not accept with love the ailment, pain and trouble of others! One who does so is subject to the curse of our sages, "When Israel is in pain and one of them separates from the community, two ministering angels place their hands on his head and say, 'So-and-so who separated from the community shall not see the comfort of the community.'"

It is as they said regarding Kfar Sakhnia... The Sages themselves testified that these people were fully righteous, so how could they not have mourned for Jerusalem?! But this is what we have said: They, like all of Israel, felt the great, overarching damage from the destruction of the place of the house of our G-d, but because they were righteous they rallied themselves and restrained the storm in their spirit, they overcame their sorrow, and they accepted it all with love.

This is why they were punished – for the pain and mourning of others, they ought to have torn the seal of their heart, to have mourned and poured forth tears!

Siach Shlomo, Eivel Yachid p. 12

חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שביזו בה תלמידי חכמים... ואמר רבא לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שפסקו ממנה אנשי אמנה...
שבת קיט:

אמנם כל זה יתכן באם יקרה לו לאדם פרטי אסון הנוגע רק אל עצמו ובשרו אז כל אשר יראת ה' נוססה בקרבו... מחויב להצדיק עליו את הדין ולברך על הרעה כמו על הטובה כי זה דרך כל איש ישר הולך לסבול במנוחת נפש כל התלאות הבאות עליו... אכן שוד ושבר אם יקרו ויאתיו על איש ועל בני אדם יחד... אז אין להאיש ההוא אף כי פגעי הזמן נחתו בו יתר מבזולתו להרגיע את רוחו לבל יצר לו בצרת אחרים... באמרו כי מקבל הוא על עצמו באהבה, זאת היא מדה מגונה ודרך מכוערה דאין לקבל באהבה מכאוב, צער וצרת אחרים, והעושה ככה חולה על ראשו קללת חכמנו ז"ל, "ת"ר בזמן שישראל שרויין בצער ופירש אחד מהם באים שני מלאכי השרת ומניחים ידיהם על ראשו, 'פלוגי זה שפירש מן הצבור אל יראה בנחמת הצבור' וכמו שפי' מאמרם ז"ל באנשי כפר סכניא... אחרי שחכמינו ז"ל בעצמם מעידים עליהם שהיו צדיקים גמורים איך יתכן להיות שלא יתאבלו על ירושלים?! אך היא הדבר שדברנו דגם המה ככל בית ישראל הרגישו גודל השבר הכללי מחורבן מקום בית אלקינו רק מאחר דהיו צדיקים התאמצו לעצור ברוחם הסער והבליגו על יגונם וקבלו הכל באהבה ולכן נענשו דעל צער ואבל אחרים הי' להם לקרוע סגור לבם להתאבל ולשפוך כמים דמעות שלישי

שיח שלמה - אבל יחיד דף 12

In this light, it is plausible that a perfectly righteous population like that of Kfar Sakhnia, while well-aware of the cost of the *churban*, and not criminally jealous of another city's centrality, might yet fail to grieve properly for the destruction of Jerusalem. Appropriately accepting the justice of Divine punishment can lead to inappropriately accepting the suffering of another human being.

This last explanation is of particular relevance for today's Jew, living in an age when assignment of blame and castigation for sin is the order of the day. Despite Talmudic statements on the ineffectiveness of modern rebuke,⁶² we see no shortage of proclamations indicting one or another sector of the Jewish world for its sins. Service in the Israeli army or failure to serve, use of the Internet or banning of the Internet, rampant materialism or failure to seek gainful employment, we have become adept at identifying the errors of others, and blaming the victim for the foibles which led to his downfall. Perhaps we would be better off with less Kfar Sakhnia, and more Yeshayah: "Be glad with Jerusalem and rejoice in her, all who love her; rejoice with her, all who mourn for her."

May we recognize the pain of our brethren who suffer, and mourn along with them, and so merit to rejoice with them this year in a fully rebuilt Jerusalem.

⁶² See Talmud, *Erchin* 16b.

Tisha B'Av: Renaissance of Normality

Rabbi Ramon Widmonte

*Rabbi of Mizrahi South Africa and Bnei Akiva South Africa
Director, The Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning*

Rabbi Widmonte has spearheaded a partnership between the South African Jewish community and YU Center for the Jewish Future, which includes sending senior educators to YU CJF to participate in our certificate programs, High school students to participate in YU's Model UN, and the printing a special edition of the Holiday To-Go for the South African community with a run of 15,000 copies.

As we approach Tisha B'Av, there are two central questions which arise. What type of behaviour should this period engender? But more profoundly, what modes of thinking and experiencing life, should grow within us? Rav Kook championed a method of Torah learning which analyzes not only the specific content of particular mitzvot, but also the thought-paradigms which the Torah implants and nurtures. In other words, he sees the process of learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvot as engendering particular modes of thinking, feeling and processing life⁶³.

One of these paradigms is particularly apt when confronting the mourning period which culminates in Tisha B'Av.

Rabbi Akiva on Exile

We learn at the end of Makkot as follows,

Rabban Gamli'el, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, Rabbi Y'hoshu'a, and Rabbi Akiva... were once ascending to Y'rushalayim. When they reached Mount Scopus [from which one can see the Temple Mount], they tore their clothing. When they arrived at the Temple Mount,

פעם אחת היו עולין לירושלים
כיון שהגיעו להר הצופים קרעו
בגדיהם כיון שהגיעו להר הבית
ראו שועל שיצא מבית קדשי
הקדשים התחילו הן בוכין ור"ע

⁶³ See for example at length, his *T'udat Yisra'el uLumiyuto* which has several examples of this, one of which is Shabbat and its concomitant fostering of an egalitarian world-view. Rav Kook's quasi-*hesped* for Theodore Herzl, *Misped Biyrushalayim* is a prime example of his so-called psycho-historic views, in which he sees history as the product of various currents of thought merging to create streams of positive change; or alternatively clashing and generating terrible storms in the historical landscape. In either case, he sees the Torah as cultivating particular modes of thought that will eventually merge with other streams to create powerful trends of human activity, reaching eventually to final, cosmic redemption.

they saw a fox running out of the area where the Holy of Holies had been. They all began to cry except for Rabbi Akiva, who began laughing.

They said to him, 'Why are you laughing?' He said to them, 'Why are you crying?' They replied [in shock], 'The place regarding which it is written, "A stranger who approaches it shall be put to death"⁶⁴ now has foxes running through it and we shouldn't cry?'

He responded, 'That's exactly why I am laughing! Because it is written, "Y'shayahu the Prophet said, 'I will bring two reliable witnesses regarding my people [and their fate], Uri'ah the Priest and Z'chari'ah ben Y'verechyahu."⁶⁵ Now, you might ask why these two people specifically are mentioned as witnesses when they lived in two different periods – one during the first temple and the other during the second temple? The verse mentions these two people in order to make Z'chari'ah's prophecy dependent on Uri'ah's. In Uri'ah's case, it is written, "Therefore, because of you, Tzion will be ploughed under like a field."⁶⁶ In the case of Z'chari'ah, we find, "Yet again, elderly men and women will sit in the streets of Y'rushalayim."⁶⁷ Now that I have seen Uriah's prophecy fulfilled, I know that Z'chari'ah's prophecy will also be fulfilled.'

Hearing that, Rabbi Akiva's colleagues said to him, 'Akiva, you have comforted us. Akiva, you have comforted us.'

Makkot 24b

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 [וגו'] בזכריה כתיב עוד ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלם עד שלא נתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה הייתי מתיירא שלא תתקיים נבואתו של זכריה עכשיו שנתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה בידוע שנבואתו של זכריה מתקיימת בלשון הזה אמרו לו עקיבא ניהמתנו עקיבא

ניחמתנו:

מכות כד:

There is a clear difficulty with Rabbi Akiva's comments: did this giant of Torah seriously doubt that the prophecy of Z'chari'ah would be fulfilled? Did he truly require a wildlife exhibition on the desolate temple mount to bolster his faith? The notion is absurd.

Directly Proportionate Destruction

The Maharsha is clearly bothered by this question and he proposes a profound solution.

Rabbi Akiva was really saying, 'I now see that Uri'ah's prophecy has been [completely] fulfilled since foxes are walking through the Holy of Holies and no-one has settled there – it is like a ploughed field which remains unsown so that idolaters do not settle there ... on the temple mount, which is as a ploughed field, a fox⁶⁸ wandering around it must leave because there is nothing beneficial there for it and the fox takes

ואמר רע"ק ועכשיו שאני רואה נבואתו של אוריה קיימת ששועלים הלכו בה ואין בה ישוב עובדי כוכבים רק כשדה החרושה ואינה זרועה כמ"ש שאין מצמיחה בה כלום שלא יתיישבו בה העכו"ם ... בהר ציון שהיא שדה החרושה ואף שועל שהולך בה שיוצא מבית ק"ק אף לו אין נחת רוח שם

⁶⁴ B'midbar 1:51.

⁶⁵ Isaiah 8:2.

⁶⁶ Michah 3:12.

⁶⁷ Z'chari'ah 8:4.

⁶⁸ The Maharsha references Eichah (5:17-18) where there is a specific lament regarding foxes wandering over the temple mount.

nothing from the mount. For this reason I am laughing because the land was so good and praiseworthy when Israel lived there and now there is no worse land, so much so that even the animals cannot live there. All this is testimony to Z'chari'ah's prophecy that Y'rushalayim will remain unsettled and that no animal will find rest there until the time of the redemption...

Maharsha ad. loc.

שאינ מוציא שם כלום ולכך אני משחק
שהארץ טובה ומשובחת כזו בזמן שהיו
ישראל יושבין עליה ועתה היא ארץ
רעה ממנה שאין לשום ב"ה נחת רוח
בה וכל זה עדות לנבואתו של זכריה
שלא יהיה ירושלים מיושב ואין לשום
ב"ה נחת רוח בה ממנו יתברך ב"ה עד
זמן הגאולה
מהרש"א על מכות כד:

According to the Maharsha, Rabbi Akiva's problem was not that he doubted the prophecies would come to fruition, G-d forbid, but that he was unsure if they had been fulfilled in his time. Uri'ah had pronounced a vision of dire destruction, but had that destruction happened yet? Perhaps there was more to come? Now, however, that the bitter root of devastation had flowered in all its gall, with all the unpleasant details clearly on display, with the Temple Mount ploughed under and foxes sauntering through it, Rabbi Akiva knew that Uri'ah's prophecy had come to pass in his day.

But there's more. The Maharsha explains that Rabbi Akiva isn't just ensuring that all the technical requirements are being fulfilled to qualify his time as that described by Uri'ah. This is not a technical issue, it is causative. Rabbi Akiva posits that there is a **directly proportionate relationship between the level of destruction caused, on the one hand, and the level of redemption which can be achieved thereafter**. Only when we see that the land of Israel, once so bountiful, has been reduced to abject poverty, when even the foxes desert it, only then can we be sure that the final redemption is on its way.

It's almost as if the utter ruin is somehow the seed of the ultimate emancipation. But how and why does this happen?

Reframing National Normality

I believe we can find a credible answer to this question in the Maharal. He opens his analysis of exile and redemption, *Netzach Yisra'el* (The Eternity of Israel) with a challenging idea which echoes the Maharsha's explanation quite clearly.

Furthermore, there is a need to explain exile first, because exile is the evidence and clear proof that there will be redemption.

The reason for this is that there is no doubt that exile is a deviation from the [natural] order – Hashem, may He be blessed, arranged each nation in the place suitable to it and He also arranged [the people of] Israel in the place suited to them, which is the land of Israel. Thus, the exile from their place is an absolute deviation [in the G-d ordained, natural order.]

Now anything which is expelled from its natural setting cannot last in an unnatural setting, it must return to its home. The reason this return must occur is that if it did not, then the unnatural would become transformed into the natural [which

ועוד שיש לבאר ענין הגלות תחלה,
כי הגלות בעצמו הוא ראיה והוכחה
ברורה על הגאולה. וזה כי אין ספק
כי הגלות הוא שנוי ויציאה מן
הסדר, שהשם יתברך סדר כל אומה
במקומה הראוי לה, וסדר את
ישראל במקום הראוי להם, שהוא
ארץ ישראל. והגלות מן מקומם הוא
שנוי ויציאה לגמרי. וכל הדברים
כאשר הם יוצאים ממקום הטבעי,
והם חוץ למקומם, אין להם עמידה
במקום הבלתי טבעי להם, רק הם
חוזרים למקומם הטבעי. כי אם היו
נשארים במקומם הבלתי טבעי להם,

would violate the laws of nature, which are held to be divinely set, unchanging and unchangeable.]

Netzach Yisra'el 1

היה הבלתי טבעי נעשה טבעי, ודבר
זה אי אפשר שיהיה הבלתי טבעי
נעשה טבעי.
נצח ישראל - פרק א

The Maharal's explanation relies upon a teleological view of reality. If the ultimate place of the Jewish people is in the land of Israel, if this inheres within our metaphysical nature, then this is normal! Anything else must be a temporary deviation, a digression, even if it lasts for two millennia. Thus, revisiting the Maharsha, the reason that Rabbi Akiva was so happy when he saw the extent of the devastation of the Temple Mount is now clear: only when the ultimate abnormality has been reached, when we are sure we have crossed the final red line, can we be sure that we are beginning to bounce back, to return to normality. Rabbi Akiva's most dependable guarantee of redemption was that we had reached the outer limits of aberration and had begun the long walk back to our default setting: freedom.⁶⁹ **The key shift in thought lies in redefining what is normal and the net result is that instead of certain processes being painful and difficult, they are in fact natural and easy.**

There are many instances of this type of reasoning in Chazal. To list but a few:

- The Gemara⁷⁰ describes the experience of the fetus, in utero. First the baby is taught the entire Torah and then as he exits the womb, an angel strikes him on the mouth so that he forgets it all. The question here is clear: why go through the process of teaching the whole Torah if it will definitely be forgotten?
It's clear that the Gemara is positing a pre-existing state of normality for every Jew – immersion in Torah – so that the whole of life becomes a journey back to the default setting.
- The Midrash's⁷¹ understanding of the creation of Adam and Chava is that they were created as one creature originally with one half male and the other half female fused back to back, and that the process of creating woman (detailed in B'reishit 2:21) actually entailed dividing the two halves and transforming each into an independent entity. Again, the central thrust here seems to be a reframing of normality – in essence, man and woman are one, the separation is temporary and much of life is spent in the quest for that elusive wholeness.

The Renaissance of Personal and Cosmic Normality

If we employ this paradigm of reframed normality in analyzing the personal *t'shuvah* and growth which Tisha B'Av and this period demand⁷², we arrive at a completely different and empowering view of sin and repentance.

Rav Kook describes *t'shuvah* as follows,

⁶⁹ Please see the Maharal's explanation of this Gemara in *Netzach Yisrael* 26, which echoes the causative element explicitly.

⁷⁰ *Niddah* 30b.

⁷¹ *B'reishit Rabbah* 8:1, cited in Rashi, *B'reishit* 1:27.

⁷² Rambam, *Ta'aniyot* 4:2

T'shuvah is the healthiest feeling of the soul. A healthy soul in a healthy body must eventually arrive at the great happiness of t'shuvah and when it does, it feels the most natural pleasure possible... The entire world must reach a complete t'shuvah. The world cannot remain static – it is always developing and improving and the true, perfect development must bring the world to complete health (both physical and spiritual) and this brings with it the vitality of the light of t'shuvah.

Rav Kook, Orot Hat'shuvah 5:1,3

התשובה היא ההרגשה היותר בריאה של הנפש. נשמה בריאה בגוף בריא מוכרחת היא לבוא לידי האושר הגדול של תשובה, והיא מרגשת בה את העונג הטבעי היותר גדול... העולם מוכרח הוא לבא לידי תשובה שלמה. אין העולם דבר עומד על מצב אחד כי-אם הולך הוא ומתפתח, וההתפתחות האמתית השלמה מוכרחת היא להביא לו את הבריאות הגמורה, החמרית והרוחנית, והיא תביא את אור חיי התשובה עמה...
אורות התשובה פרק ה - הכרחיות מציאות התשובה ופעולתה באדם בעולם ובכנסת ישראל / א,ג

Unless one has a completely different sense of the default setting of humanity, it is difficult to grasp Rav Kook's meaning: why are we assured of an eventual cosmic and personal perfection? To some extent, the reason we find this difficult to accept is that we have accustomed ourselves to believing that the fallen states of the world and humanity, are normal⁷³.

Rav Kook's view is the opposite. 'The world cannot remain static – it is always developing and improving and the true, perfect development must bring the world to complete health...' And regarding each human being, well, we are nothing less than divine – made in the image of a perfect G-d.

If one adopts such a view, any sin, any downfall, can never be anything more than a pause, a detour, which must inevitably end, after which we continue on our normal path – that of physical and spiritual health.

This radically upended paradigm informs much of what Rav Kook taught regarding people, the nation of Israel and the cosmos. A simple example of this is his attitude towards the theory of evolution.

The evolutionary way of thinking, so popular as a result of recent scientific studies, has caused considerable upheaval among many people whose thought had been wont to run in certain regular, well-defined paths. Not so, however, for the select, hard-thinking few who have always seen a gradual, evolutionary development in the world's most intimate spiritual essence. For them it is not difficult to apply, by analogy, the same principle to the physical development of the visible world. It is indeed fitting that the emergence of the latter should parallel the spiritual development of all being, where no step in the gradually unfolding pattern is ever left vacant.

Orot HaKodesh II p. 538:2

מהלך המחשבה של ההתפתחות, שנתפרסמה בכל השדרות, לרגלי למודי הטבע החדשים, עשתה מהפכה רבה, בחוג המחשבות הרגילות. לא אצל יחידי הסגולה, בעלי הדעה וההגיון, שמעולם הסתכלו בסדרי השתלשלות דרגאים, אפילו בההויה הרוחנית המוסקרת בסקירה היותר נסתרה, שאין הדבר זר אצלם להבין במדת ההשואה גם כן באופן זה בדבר ההתפתחות החומרית של העולם המוחשי, שראוי הדבר שתהיה התגלותו מתאמת להשתלשלות הרוחנית של ההויה, שאינה מחסרת דרגה אחת בדילוג וריקניות.
אורות הקודש / חלק ב / עמוד תקלה:2

⁷³ One wonders if this is not somewhat a function of a long exile in a predominantly Christian culture?

As he notes, Rav Kook's fascination with the notion of evolution was not so much due to the particular theory, but because it is an example of this 'way of thinking', this paradigm, whereby the cosmos is simply returning to an already inherent order, splendour and perfection.

Be Normal

Besides the sense of stability that this paradigm engenders, I believe that it balances the generally promethean view we have of *t'shuvah* and growth. There is a great romantic attraction towards the bold image of a lonely man of faith, forging himself *ex nihilo nili* from the bare bones of his being in the fires of antinomy.

On the other hand, there is an equally empowering and levelling view – in which I am already there, already great, already present, if I would but let myself be. And if I have strayed for some reason, then the path back is not torturous but the simplest, healthiest affirmation of just being normal. Instead of perfection being an excruciating uphill climb, it is a smooth ride home.

Collected Tisha B'Av

Insights from YU

Community Rebbetzins

Introduction

Meira Davis

Coordinator, Personal and Professional Enhancement Program for Rebbetzins
Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future
Rebbetzin, Young Israel of Hollywood

A Rebbetzin is in a unique position, acquired solely by virtue of being married to a rabbi. She balances raising a family, her own profession and her husband's demanding schedule. In addition she takes her "volunteer" role as rebbetzin very seriously and greatly impacts on the growth of her community by working as a team with her husband and through her own multiple unique contributions to their synagogue.

The Center for the Jewish Future recognizes the invaluable role of this often "unsung heroine". It provides programming for the newer rebbetzins through the Rebbetzin Esther Rosenblatt Rebbetzins Yarchei Kallah where they have the opportunity to meet with seasoned professionals to discuss issues of self, family and community in a safe and supportive environment and to network with each other. Other resources are offered as well.

We are honored to present to you, a collection of articles from our rebbetzins to provide a unique perspective on Tisha B'Av and its themes. The collection represents a variety of styles and perspectives and highlights the humanity, passion and intellectual sophistication of our rebbetzins. May Hashem bless them with success in their many roles.

Yissurim and Teshuva

Naomi Dardik

Rebbetzin, Beth Jacob Congregation, Oakland, CA

The year is 70 C.E. We have been exiled from Israel and the *Beit Hamikdash*, our Temple desecrated and destroyed. We were warned that such destruction would come if we, as a nation, did not do *teshuva* (repentance), but we did not listen. It is difficult to wrap our minds around the horrors that we have seen or heard about. Everybody is either mourning a personal loss, or knows someone who is. We struggle with the philosophical questions around how Hashem lets

this much suffering happen; can any offense warrant this degree of punishment? And what of those who suffered but did not sin?

The problems of theodicy have always weighed upon us, as they should. But there is another dimension to the experience of suffering, a psychological dimension that is affected by, but not defined by, its philosophical cousin. We may find ourselves at something of a loss, when experiencing overwhelming pain, to make sense of the seemingly contradictory sources that seem to steer us in opposite directions when we try to make sense of the role of *s'char va'onesh*, reward and punishment, in a Torah framework. We find sources that seem to indicate that all suffering comes as a result of our flaws and errors, and that we therefore need to take actions to correct those mistakes. We also find sources that indicate that some events in this world happen by chance and that some suffering cannot be explained by sins. So how are we to think about *teshuva* as a response to suffering when we are confronted with it?

The Talmud and *halachic* (Jewish legal) sources often advocate *teshuva*, repentance, as the appropriate response to the experience of suffering. The Talmud (*Berachot* 5a) teaches:

If troubles befall a person, he should examine his actions. | אם רואה אדם שיסורין באין עליו יפשפש במעשיו.

The implication is often taken as suggesting a causal relationship, a variation on “there is no suffering without sin” (*Shabbat* 55a). If someone is experiencing suffering, why should he examine his actions? Because that’s where he’ll find the reason for his troubles as well as the path he should take to rectify his errors. The Rambam too, in *Hilchot Teshuva* (1:4) explains that one does not achieve *kapara*, atonement, for some transgressions, until he undergoes *yissurin*, or suffering. This makes for a tidy counterpart to the Talmudic teaching as it suggests that the suffering is both a direct result of a transgression and provides the needed atonement for it.

But we also have another concept. The continuation of the above-mentioned Gemara in *Berachot* 5a, suggests the notion of “*yissurin shel ahava*,” literally, ‘afflictions of love.’ These sufferings are not to be interpreted as a punishment of any sort, or as a needed atonement, but rather to provide a name and context for suffering which cannot or should not be perceived as retribution. So, ostensibly, if a person responding to suffering approaches it through some variation of this idea, that his pain is not a punishment for mistakes or shortcomings but simply is, then he would not be required to be “*mefashpesh bema’asav*,” and repent beyond whatever repentance he would otherwise engage in.

But what if we look at our sufferings and say that we are not looking for reasons, not looking to connect the causal dots to try and ascertain what spiritual ailment brought our suffering upon ourselves (and then, perhaps, also imagine that we can protect ourselves from future pain)? What if at the same time that we do not accept the idea that we are being punished, we still want to respond in a spiritually constructive way? What if we are interested in *teshuva*, but resist the idea that we should interpret particular sufferings as Divine chastisement for our shortcomings? Is there a way to reconcile these two approaches and engage in the “examining of actions” in response to the suffering without endorsing the idea that the suffering was caused by whatever of these actions may be faulty?

Maybe we can. Rabbi Morey Schwartz in *Where's My Miracle?* discusses Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi's explanation from *Sefer HaKuzari* about how G-d interacts with the world. He writes that there are four different categories that encompass the different ways in which Divine providence operates: 1. Phenomena under direct, Divine intervention, 2. Natural phenomena that are specifically directed but that come to be through the laws of nature, 3. Incidental phenomena that happen through the laws of nature by chance and 4. "Chosen" phenomena which come about through the human being's exercise of his free will.

If we accept Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi's division, we must then concede that we will not always know (and likely never know) into which category a particular instance of suffering falls. The philosophical question of how to frame the experience remains unanswered. However, alongside this existential ambiguity, we have not lost the "halachic" imperative (to borrow the Rav's concept from "*Kol Dodi Dofek*") to respond in a constructive way. And what better way to respond than to be "*mefashpesh bema'asav?*" We need not ascribe causality to an event or experience to be able to take advantage of the opportunity to learn from it. Maybe this particular instance of suffering was from the first category, phenomena directly from Hashem, and when we examine our actions and find a fault, we may really have discovered a metaphysical cause. When we do *teshuva* for that fault, we are fulfilling what *Chazal*, our sages, hoped we would when they advocated such examination of actions. But maybe we won't find the particular fault that led to our suffering. And maybe this particular instance of suffering is from category three and was a naturally occurring phenomenon that happened by chance and there is no specific fault to which it can be traced. But the point is, even then, that we can still engage in the "*pishpush be'ma'asim,*" the examining of actions. We can create an opportunity for growth out of our pain even when there may not be a particular offense leading to a particular consequence. If part of how Hashem wants us to grow in life is to take advantage of the small and enormous challenges that inevitably occur by virtue of living in a natural world, then maybe this type of *teshuva* is exactly what we are supposed to do in response to suffering even if it is not coming in response to a particular sin. How can we do this? Perhaps we become more patient, generous and compassionate with others by having greater experience to draw on. Maybe we are slower to judge others, seeing that we sometimes require more forgiveness ourselves. Perhaps the intensity of our reaction to the event may lead to introspective questions that lead to deeper self-understanding. That can be a part of *teshuva* too.

Many of us have grown up learning or have heard in adulthood about the sins for which the *Beit Hamikdash*, the Temple, was destroyed. We may have heard the story about Kamtza and Bar-Kamtza and the idea of "*sinat chinam,*" baseless hatred of others. Perhaps we have even heard the phrase that "whoever does not merit seeing the Temple rebuilt in his days, it is as if it was destroyed in his days" which may be interpreted as placement of guilt on each of us.

In the intellectually sophisticated and wonderfully diverse communities of the Modern Orthodox world we see different responses to this perspective. Many people find the historical thread between us and the generation of the *churban*, the destruction, connective and empowering. Hashem is waiting for us to do *teshuva* and then the *Beit Hamikdash* will be rebuilt and *Mashiach* can come. The justice of Hashem's ways may not be clear to us but it is

incontrovertible. For these people, the exhortation to be “*mefashpesh be'ma'asav*” may inspire growth and *teshuva*. Others are somewhat reluctant to assume a degree of personal responsibility for the destruction of the Temple and all the other myriad horrors to which we have been exposed. For these people, those dots do not connect. For them, the instruction to examine their actions in response to suffering can backfire, leaving them feeling alienated and resentful rather than connected and motivated to grow. However, the possibility of taking advantage of Tisha B'Av and its focus on the suffering and destruction that we have endured as a nation, not as an exercise in blame and guilt but as an opportunity to think about ways in which we can grow, may be a more palatable alternative that can lead to real *teshuva* as well.

Our communities have mystics and rationalists, people who connect through learning and people who connect through mitzvot. Paths to *teshuva* are not uniform either. It is essential that community leaders help to provide opportunities for different paths of *teshuva* so that all the roads that we take as a people lead not to Rome, but to Jerusalem.

Practicing

Tikvah Ellis

Rebbetzin, Herzlia Adas-Yeshurun Synagogue, Winnipeg, Manitoba

There is a dog in our neighborhood named Bruiser. He is not much of a Bruiser. He is an old dog and a small furry puff ball at that. To top it all off Bruiser is blind. My kids like to pet all the “petting doggies” in the neighborhood, so my preschoolers were introduced to the concept of disability. Although Bruiser cannot see, he does like kids and can find them by smell. Sometimes after petting Bruiser we talk about his blindness and I always mention that people can also be blind or have any number of disabilities.

Once we went to the Sharon Home, the local Jewish nursing home, and met a blind resident. Afterwards, I spoke to my children about the lady we had met and was happy to see that they had a framework for understanding her blindness. Their experiences with Bruiser served as practice for meeting someone disabled.

Just as when Av begins we decrease happiness, so too when Adar begins we increase happiness.

Taanit 29a

כשם שמשנכנס אב ממעטין בשמחה כך משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה.
תענית כט.

Adar and Av both come every year. That means when we are happy, we know we will be sad again and when we are sad we know we will be happy again. Even when things are going well, we know that we will encounter tragedy again. It would be very short-sighted to think that our kids are sheltered from thoughts of death and destruction. When I taught kindergarten sometimes death would come up in the *parsha* and every kid would have something to say. Just like we know that Tisha B'Av is on next year's calendar, we know our children will have to encounter death. It is a scary reality but all we can do is practice for it.

When there is a death in the community that my children have any link to at all, I tell my children about it. I even take them to make shiva calls when appropriate. We always make sure to review appropriate behavior. My husband is a shul rabbi and our social circle is very large. Many

of the deaths I tell my kids about could be hidden from them easily; and it might save them a little pain and sadness. But it would not teach them about the full cycle of life, nor prepare them for community life. Our children must practice this part of life just like any other. My daughter made her first shiva call when the woman who passed away was the mother of a close friend and neighbor. My daughter was able to come and be *menachem avel* (comfort a mourner) for the first time when the death did not personally affect her.

Another time I took my kids on a shiva call before school. My daughter very gently and shyly gave one of the *avelim* (mourners) a hug. When I took my kids to school, I wrote them each a big mitzvah note. Very real catastrophe is incongruent with the bright cheery world of kindergarten and mitzvah notes. But, our kids are part of a wider world that includes terrible things.

Several months ago my husband's Zayde died. He was my children's great grandfather and a man they knew and loved. They were very sad and troubled by Zayde's death. But I was so glad that they had encountered death before we returned to California for Zayde's funeral and shiva. They were able to learn about death and the mechanics of proper shiva behavior when they were not sad. That practice allowed them to better handle the time after Zayde's passing. They were at the shiva house the entire time and knew how to behave and give comfort to my mother-in-law. They were as prepared as they could be.

In this article, I wrote about the importance of teaching children to handle tragedy because we know terrible things do happen. But, conversely, even in the saddest moments we must know that joy will come. I bless us all that out of the depth of our despair comes great joy and many blessings.

L'Torah, L'Chuppah, U L'Kiddush Hashem

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One inauspicious day in the year 1096, a young Jewish mother named Rachel saw to the slaughter of her own four children. Fearful of the children's conversion by Christian crusaders, the mother erupted in tears, beat her face, brashly accused God of withholding His love, and then unflinchingly carried out the gruesome slaying, even as her little son cried out "My mother, my mother, do not slay me." Carefully arranging the bodies of her dead children in her arms, the mother then waited to meet her own death at the hands of the crusaders.

This gut-wrenching story of child martyrdom, and others like it, appears in medieval Jewish descriptions about the violence perpetrated against the Jews during the First Crusade.⁷⁴ Rife with similar accounts, Jewish Crusade literature glorifies child martyrdom, describing children making grand sacrificial gestures, such as preparing knives and positioning their bodies for

⁷⁴ This story is presented in two of the three Hebrew Crusade Chronicles, namely the Mainz Anonymous and Solomon bar Samson chronicles, as well as in a medieval *piyyut* (liturgical poem) included in the standard Ashkenazi corpus of *Kinnot*. See the chronicles in Chazan, Robert. *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) 238 and 258. For the *piyyut*, see Artscroll *Kinnot*, 294.

slaughter, mothers killing their nursing infants, “eating their own fruit, their newborn babes,” and escorting their children to execution “as if to a beautiful bridal canopy.”⁷⁵

Although these texts are painful to read, the Crusades, and specifically the slaughter of children, have become focal points of our commemoration and grief on Tisha B’Av. In the first *kinnah* (elegiac poem) explicitly not about the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* (Temple), Tisha B’Av is described as a day for recalling Crusade martyrs, including children:

... I shall arouse the bitter of heart, the confounded one, to weep with me, over the beautiful maidens and the tender lads, wrapped in their scrolls and dragged to the slaughter...

Please take to your hearts to compose a bitter eulogy, because their massacre is deserving of mourning and rolling in dust as was the burning of the House of our God, its Hall, and its Palace. However, [we] cannot add a [new] day [of mourning] over ruin and conflagration, nor may [we] mourn any earlier—only later. Instead, today [on Tisha B’Av], I will arouse my sorrowful wailing, and I will eulogize and wail with a bitter soul, and my groans are heavy from morning until evening. Over the House of Israel and over the nation of Hashem, because they have fallen by the sword...

Kinnot for Tisha B’Av (Artscroll Translation pp. 270, 275)

ואבכה עמי מרי לבב הנבוכים,
על בתולות היפות וילדים הרכים,
בספריהם נכרכים ולטבח נמשכים

...
שימו נא על לבבכם מספד מר
לקשרה, כי שקולה הריגתם
להתאבל ולהתעפרה, כשרפת בית
א-לקינו האולם והבירה, וכי אין
להוסיף מועד שבר ותבערה, ואין
להקדים זולתי לאחרה, תחת כן
היום לוייתי אעוררה, ואספדה
ואילילה ואבכה בנפש מרה, ואנחתי
כבדה מבקר ועד ערב, על בית
ישראל ועל עם ה' כי נפלו בחרב.
קינות לתשעה באב, מי יתן ראשי
מים (קינה כה)

According to this *kinnah*, Tisha B’Av functions as a day that encompasses all tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people through its history. Rejecting the notion that individual tragedies maintain their distinctiveness, we are taught that all of them stem from one tragic source—the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*. Like the *Churban* (destruction of the Temple), which resulted in the loss of the Jewish people’s religious, political, social, economic, and legal epicenter, the Crusades brought about an utter de-centering and destabilization of the medieval Jewish communities of Germany. Repeatedly called upon by the literature to recall and re-envision the slaughter of children, we may ask: How did child martyrdom, specifically, come to epitomize the turmoil experienced by Jews as a result of the Crusades?

Understanding how children were perceived in medieval Ashkenaz, under normal circumstances, may provide insight into the meaning of child martyrdom. A window into Ashkenazic perceptions of children may be found in a unique child-centered ceremony created by Jews during the Middle Ages, and aimed at initiating male children into the world of Torah study. This dramatic ceremony, which took place annually on Shavuot, generally involved wrapping five-year-old boys in *tallitot* (prayer shawls), escorting them into the lap of a teacher at the synagogue, introducing them to the letters of the *alef-bet* and the book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus) and, in some cases, engaging them in a peculiar riverbank ritual. The author of the definitive

⁷⁵ See Habermann, A. *Gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Tsarfat*. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1945) 224, Chazan, Robert, 272, Bernfeld, Simon. *Sefer Hademaot*. vol. I. (Berlin: Eshkol, 1923) 198, and Carmi, T. *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1981) 375.

study on this subject, Ivan Marcus, notes that the texts describing the ceremony draw two major implications about children.⁷⁶ Firstly, they indicate that children, during the initiation, become equated, through verbiage and symbolism, with the *Bnei Israel* (children of Israel) at Mount Sinai. In this view, the child's separation from home, transition to synagogue, initiation into education and, sometimes, post-initiation riverbank excursion, was seen as mimicking the journey from Egypt, to desert, to Sinai, to incorporation into the world of nations at the banks of the River Jordan.⁷⁷

Secondly, the texts imply that children became synonymous with the text itself, with Torah. Wrapped protectively in a *tallit*, escorted by scholars into the synagogue with fanfare, literally ingesting words of Scripture inscribed onto cakes and eggs, and being metaphorically linked to symbols such as flour, honey, milk, and water, the child was seen as simultaneously entering the Torah as the Torah entered the child. From this perspective, the child and Torah became one.⁷⁸

According to Marcus, the most unique aspect of this rite of medieval Jewish passage was not the metaphorical association of children with the *Bnei Israel* or with Torah, metaphors that could claim a history in ancient Judaism, but rather the ritualization, the performance, and the acting out of the metaphors that took place.⁷⁹ Taking the metaphors out of the theoretical realm of literature and playing them out in real life, Jews of medieval Ashkenaz, on a practical level, relived Sinai through the revelation experienced by their children on Shavuot and through their children's incorporation into a homogenous community of Jews.

We may see in the Jewish Crusade literature that the acting-out of these metaphors was extended by medieval Jews to times of crisis as well. Looking at the texts, including some of the *kinnot* we recite on Tisha B'Av, we may discern the same metaphorical associations of children-as-nation and children-as-Torah that are implicit in the Jewish initiation ceremony. Firstly, we can see that Jewish writers repeatedly point to male children, specifically, as undergoing some kind of initiation process through their slaughter, resulting in a new level of intimacy or encounter with God as well as their incorporation into a homogenous "new" community of Jews residing in Paradise (the platonic Jewish community, so to speak). Asked, at the crucial moment before martyrdom, questions like "Do you wish to exchange your God for a wretched idol?" "Do you wish to enter into hell or paradise?", and "Do you wish to receive the countenance of the Divine presence?", boys are invited to join the community of martyrs and usually accept the invitation.⁸⁰ The moment of martyrdom, then, was seen as a rite of passage, wherein the child became part of the Jewish nation. The unification of disparate parts of the Jewish people is a theme that recurs in the Jewish literature, in phrases such as "They sacrificed each other until the blood flowed together," and "The blood of husbands mingled with that of their wives, the blood of parents with that of their children, the blood of brothers with that of their sisters, the blood of teachers with that of their

⁷⁶ Marcus, Ivan G. *Rituals of childhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

⁷⁷ Marcus, 79-80.

⁷⁸ Marcus 53-60.

⁷⁹ Marcus, 6-7, 56-58, 74.

⁸⁰ Chazan, 230, 240, 260, 291.

students ... the blood of infants and sucklings with that of their mothers.”⁸¹ Through child martyrdom, a new unified nation of martyrs was seen as having been created.

Secondly, we may discern the equation of children with Torah in the Jewish crusade literature.

Recalling *Kinnah* 25, which states “... the tender lads wrapped in their scrolls and dragged to the slaughter,” we may note that, indeed, much of this *kinnah* is devoted to mourning over the Torah, Torah scholars, and children, as if they are one and the same. The Jewish reports on the Crusade are even more explicit:

*There was a Torah scroll there in the chamber. The crusaders came into the chamber, found it, and tore it to shreds. When the saintly and pious women, the daughters of kings, saw the Torah had been torn, they called out loudly to their husbands: “Behold, behold the holy Torah, for the enemy is tearing it.” The women said all together “Woe for the holy Torah, ‘perfect in beauty,’ ‘the delight of our eyes.’ We would bow down to it in the synagogue and our little children kissed it. We honored it, yet how has it fallen into hands of these uncircumcised and impure.”*⁸²

Just as mothers describe children as having kissed the Torah in this passage, *Kinnah* 22 asks the Torah to mourn for children who died during the Crusade: “Torah, O Torah, gird yourself in sackcloth and roll yourself in ashes, make yourself mourn for your only son ...” Thus, the literature seems to point to a reciprocal relationship between children and Torah. Furthermore, this passage describes the Torah as “the delight of our eyes,” a phrase that is derived from Ezekiel 24: 16, 21, and 25. In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet speaks to the Israelite community, warning them to accept their fate and not to mourn when God strikes “the delight of your eyes,” which Ezekiel explicitly explains twice, as a reference to “sons and daughters.” It would appear, then, that the same phrase used by the *navi* (prophet) to refer to children is applied by the Jewish Crusade writers to Torah. Perhaps, most importantly, this passage pits the “holiness,” “beauty,” and “honor” of the Torah against the status of the “uncircumcised” and “impure” Christians. Taking the contrast between Torah and Christians to its logical conclusion, the Torah can be seen as synonymous with “circumcised” and “pure,” two qualities seen as ontological to the Jewish child.

In a sense, then, child martyrdom functioned for medieval Jews as a rite of passage akin to that of the Child Initiation ceremony. During a period of tremendous religious upheaval, in which the threat of the forced conversion of children loomed large, Jews assured children’s incorporation into the community and unity with Torah through the act of child martyrdom. At a time of destabilization, similar to the *Churban*, in which a fully spiritual Jewish life could not proceed as usual and religious identity lay in the balance, child martyrdom served as a ritual that helped to fortify the sanctity of Jewish children and, thereby, the Jewish community as a whole. In lieu of positive rituals such as the Child Initiation ceremony, Jews created a new, simultaneously tragic and regenerative space, in which the child and community could achieve its greatest spiritual potential. *Kinnah* 22 describes this exchange of the life ritual for the death ritual:

Neither a man nor a woman showed weakening pity for the

ולא חסו גבר וגבירה, על בנים

⁸¹ Chazan, 255.

⁸² Chazan, 240, 260.

[children whose] faces were like a splendid tiara. Instead they girded themselves with abnormal courage to smash the head and sever the spine. Then they addressed them with these words, 'We merited not to raise you in the Torah['s ways], let us bring you nearer [to God], like burnt-offering and incense.'

Kinnot for Tisha B'Av (Artscroll Translation pg. 257)

צפירת תפארה, אבל אזרו גבורה
יתרה, להלום ראש ולקרוץ שדרה,
ואלימו דברי באמירה, לא זכינו
לגדלכם לתורה, נקריבכם כעולה
והקטרה.

קינות לתשעה באב, החרישו
(קינה כב)

While Jews in the Middle Ages had all the same hopes that we do, encompassed by the blessing "L'Torah, L'chuppah, u-l'maasim tovim (the blessing recited at the time of circumcision, lit. To Torah, to wedding canopy, to good deeds)," they ultimately saw their children achieve those blessings via *Kiddush Hashem* (martyrdom, lit. sanctifying the Name of God). Thank God, today, we have the ability to see our children as small community members and embodiments of Torah, in a positive way. As the wife of a community rabbi, I had the rare opportunity of reintroducing the medieval Jewish Child Initiation Ceremony, with all its implications regarding children, to my *shul*, on the occasion of my son's birthday. In addition, on Simkhat Torah, I often find myself "acting out" the metaphor of children-as-Torah by dancing with the children of our *shul*. However, on Tisha B'Av, as I recall all the tragedies that have struck the Jewish community throughout the ages, I am reminded of the precariousness of this stability and the painful ways that Jews throughout history have tried to preserve their sanctity in the darkest of ways. Every generation finds its own sacred space, language, and way of getting close to God. May we all find our own unique ways of holiness and see the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

Tisha Be'av and Yosef Hatzadik

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The story of Yosef Hatzadik also tells the story of the Jewish people learning how to live in *galut* (exile). The commentators describe this instance of *maaseh avot siman levanim* (the actions of our forefathers foreshadow the lives of their descendants) as paving the way for how we, his ancestors, should navigate our own existence in the post exile world, living among the nations.

His conduct and character serve as an inspiration for us and we can learn from all that he did right, just as much as we can learn from all of his mistakes and missteps. There is a Midrash that Gavriel Hamalach came to Yosef while he was in jail and taught him the 70 languages (*Sotah* 36b). If we are to understand this Midrash in a more figurative way, it could mean that Gavriel taught Yosef how to take his message and translate it into a way that the other nations would understand without compromising the integrity of that message.

As Jews, we are constantly trying to assert our relevance in and share our message with the world. When translated thoughtfully and articulately, our message can make a *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of G-d's name) and bring people closer to G-d and Torah. But the message translated without thought can be destructive and create a terrible *Chilul Hashem* (desecration of G-d's name). The same talents and strength of spirit that drive us as Jews to succeed can

bring us down as well. The nations of the world seem keenly aware of when we misstep and falter. Yosef experiences that same success as well as the scrutiny that comes along with it.

Yosef, as a role model, is driven by vision, truth, survival and pride, and made decisions considering *diyukno shel aviv* (the image of his father). He understands that his role is essential yet the story playing out is so much bigger than him alone. These are the qualities that have enabled Jews to rise up to such great levels of success after painful times of persecution, and yet perverted, these are the traits that have led us astray.

Knowing that we come from greatness gives us confidence but also responsibility. We must keep building the equity of Torah for the next generation even in times of Torah scarcity so that we do not deplete the years of investments made by past generations in times of Torah abundance.

Some Jews may leave Torah, exploring other passions and yet maintain a cultural identity, and manage not to destroy the fabric of the Jewish people. This only remains true as long as the investments of their ancestors continue to kick in dividends, and as long as many dedicated Jews are still investing. When the Torah 'economy' is not good and we are not reinvesting dividends, we begin to consume principal until our spiritual balance falls into the red. We have to look to the future with passion and confidence, *yesh sachar lipeulatech ... veyesh tikvah l'acharitech*, there is a reward for your efforts and hope at the end (Yirmyahu 31:15). The future holds up hope; The past provides context, meaning and integrity. This is the message of Yosef and the message of Tisha Be'av. One day it will be celebrated as a *chag* (holiday). That is an interesting thought but one day is not now, we might say. In truth, the fact that one day it will be a *chag*, actually informs the nature of how the day can and should wash over us. It is the promise of a majestic future and the memory of a devastating and glorious past that entwine to create the day of Tisha Be'av, mourning and hoping all at the same time and in the same breath.

The Mourning Relationship

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Whoever mourns for Jerusalem will merit to see its rejoicing; and all who do not mourn for Jerusalem will not see its rejoicing.

Ta'anit 30b

כל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה
בשמחתה ושאינו מתאבל על ירושלים אינו
רואה בשמחתה
תענית ל:

What does it mean to mourn? It's a question I ask myself when I am trying to understand the meaning and connection that Jewish traditions, history and practices have in my life. Why are we mourning Jerusalem? What's the point? When one "mourns" on Tisha b'Av, how does that look? Feel? Should I be crying on the outside? Inside? Should we all be too upset to eat, talk or go on with regular activities? Are you sad? What are you sad about?

For each one of us, the answer will be different. Some of us will mourn the loss of the Beit Hamikdash, a building that was host to Hashem's presence; others are mourning the loss of

community that went along with having everyone together in Yerushalayim. Some are mourning the lack of closeness they feel to Israel or to Hashem because of the state of destruction we are in. The fact that we all are mourning something different on Tisha b'Av shows the rich and unique impact the Beit Hamikdash and Yerushalayim have in our lives.

Mourning is about connecting to a lost relationship, whether to an object or human being. We experience the loss of something or someone no longer physically in our lives. Jewish tradition tells us that when we mourn the loss of a loved one, we are not obligated in any *mitzvot*, because the pain is so terrible and one cannot think or be involved with anything else. But the loss of a loved one connotes that there was a relationship, someone who was loved. In order to mourn on Tisha b'Av we need to connect to our loved one: the Beit Hamikdash and Yerushalayim. Many of us have been privileged to experience/ get a glimpse of what it means to have a relationship with and rejoice in Eretz Yisrael. Others mourn the lack of relationship. They understand the greatness that once existed and that exists today and they mourn the inability to connect to something amazing. Yes, we recognize our loss of relationship and connection, but how do we internalize the personal level of devastation which led to the tradition of not being obligated in *mitzvot*?

Unfortunately, almost two years ago I watched my community mourn the loss of one of our loved ones. Gilad Schwartz z"l a student, friend, and community member of the Orthodox community at the University of Maryland, passed away less than a week before beginning his sophomore year on campus. Students were totally devastated, and we worked hard to find a way to commemorate him; a meaningful way to show respect and admiration for the incredible person Gilad was.

Each week at University of Maryland we have a wonderful program called Pizza Parsha, where anywhere from 50-100 students come together to learn Parsha and eat pizza with friends. Gilad was a regular at this program; it provided him the opportunity to take a break from classes, get something to eat, and discuss the parsha and whatever was on his mind with friends. When it was time for his *shloshim*, a month after his death, we decided to dedicate that week's Pizza Parsha in his memory. We prepared in the traditional way, by having a *dvar Torah* and preparing sources in order to pay tribute to the wonderful person he was and the impact he had on our community. But there was actual mourning that took place at the program that evening when we as individuals and as a community reflected on the relationship we had with Gilad and his unique approach to Judaism. Some people connected to Gilad through learning, not just by reading the parsha but by learning a piece of Torah we chose from the Rambam that reflected the way he approached life. Gilad's close friends connected to him by speaking and sharing personal stories and inspiration from his life. Lastly, there were those that connected to him through song. Gilad was a musician, so his friends closed the program by singing a song they wrote in order to show their connection and to mourn in a way that expressed the depths of their relationship with Gilad.

When we try and connect to Yerushalayim and the loss of the Beit Hamikdash today, we all need to connect to our relationship with Yerushalayim in order to really mourn something so significant. We may mourn the loss of: the closeness to spirituality, the feeling of being at the

crossroads of the world, being invited by total strangers for Shabbat and feeling at home, or the loss of real shwarma. When we each contemplate our relationship to Israel and the thought of that being taken away, then we can really connect, but we need that song, picture, story or Torah to inspire and connect us to the relationship we are trying to recapture.

This loss of experiences may be indicative of what the phrase teaches – that one who mourns will be able to rejoice. However, I think it could also be read backwards: one who once rejoiced is one who will be able to truly mourn. If you never connected or rejoiced, it will be hard for you to mourn.

The Beit Hamikdash and Yerushalayim in its perfected state were something that was prematurely taken from the Jewish people, just as Gilad was taken from our community. We should feel the devastation of not being able to rejoice in the true presence of Hashem in a city that is in its full glory. Hopefully, through our efforts to find our connection and to mourn individually in our own way and as a community, we will be able to rejoice and connect to true *simcha*... .. *Mehara Hashem Elokeinu, od yishama b'arei Yehuda u'vechuzot Yerushalayim, kol sasson v'kol simcha*...

Tisha B'av and the Power of Love

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Tisha B'av is a day of deep mourning for the Jewish people and marks two of our largest national calamities; the destruction of both the first and second Beit HaMikdash. The Talmud (*Yoma* 9b) teaches us that the first Beit HaMikdash was destroyed because of three sins: idolatry, sexual immorality and bloodshed. It would seem logical that if the Jewish people were committing these three cardinal sins, that their service to HaShem had been so disregarded and their connection to Him so severed, that there wasn't room for HaShem's Shechinah to rest and remain in the holy Temple. Yet, even after committing these grave sins, the second Beit HaMikdash was built a mere seventy years later. In contrast to this, the second Beit HaMikdash was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE and yet, here we are in 2012, still waiting, still longing for the third Beit HaMikdash to be built. What could have caused the destruction of the second Beit HaMikdash so long ago, that still today we haven't merited its rebuilding? What terrible sin could we be guilty of that the Talmud Yerushalmi (*Yoma* 1:1) would state of us that "any generation which does not see the Beit HaMikdash rebuilt is considered to have destroyed it?!"

The Talmud (*Yoma* 9b) gives us an answer:

Why was the Second Temple destroyed, seeing that during the time it stood people occupied themselves with Torah, with observance of precepts, and with the practice of charity? Because during the time it stood, hatred without rightful cause prevailed.

מקדש שני, שהיו עוסקין בתורה
ובמצות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה
חרב? מפני שהיתה בו שנאת
חנם.

The Talmud seems to be saying that the nation's service to HaShem had improved; the Jewish people were learning Torah, doing mitzvot and were meticulous in their relationship with HaShem. They seem to have corrected what their downfall was in the destruction of the first

Beit HaMikdash and yet it wasn't enough to keep the second Beit HaMikdash standing. It was what the Talmud calls "sinat chinam," hate without reason or cause and their lack of respect and acceptance of others that caused the complete destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. They were working to enhance and perfect their personal relationship with HaShem but not working on their relationships with others, with their spouses, children, friends or community members. The Jewish people were under the influence of a colossal misunderstanding. They hadn't realized that one of the greatest ways to show love of HaShem is by loving one another and fulfilling the mitzvah of *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha* (love your neighbor like yourself), through the realization that each and every person is created *b'tzelem Elokim*, in the image of G-d. I once heard an idea from the Lubavitcher Rebbe that helps us to understand this point with the following parable: What if someone said to you, 'I love you, but I don't like your children?' You would probably say: 'You may think that you love me, but you don't really. You don't care for what I care most deeply about. Obviously, you don't know anything about me, and you don't know what love is, either!' Loving a fellow human being, another child of G-d, is showing we love what He loves, cares for who He cares for, and is ultimately one of the greatest ways to demonstrate love of HaShem.

On the Shabbat before Tisha B'av, known as *Shabbat Chazon*, we read from the book of Isaiah:

Why do I need your numerous sacrifices?...I am sated with elevation-offerings... the blood of bulls, sheep and goats I do not desire...Bring your worthless meal offerings no longer, it is incense of abomination to Me... My soul detests your New Moons and your appointed times... When you spread your hands in prayer I will hide My eyes from you, even if you were to intensify your prayers, I will not listen; your hands are replete with blood. Wash yourselves, purify yourselves, remove the evil of your deeds from before My eyes; cease doing evil. Learn to do good, seek justice, vindicate the victim, render justice to the orphan, take up the grievance of the widow.

Isaiah 1:11-17

לָמָּה לִי רַב זְבָחֵיכֶם יֵאמֶר ה' שְׂבַעְתִּי עֲלוֹת אֱלֹהִים וְחֶלֶב מְרִיאִים וְדָם פְּרִים וּכְבָשִׂים וְעֲתוּדִים לֹא חִפְצָתִי. כִּי תִבְאוּ לְרֵאוֹת פָּנָי מִי בִקֵּשׁ זֹאת מִיָּדְכֶם רִמַּס חֲצָרָי. לֹא תוֹסִיפוּ הָבִיא מִנְחַת שָׁוְא קִטְרֹת תוֹעֵבָה הִיא לִי הַדָּשׁ וְשִׁבֹת קִרְא מִקִּרְא לֹא אוֹכֵל אֲנִי וְעֲצָרָה. חֲדָשֵׁיכֶם וּמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם שָׁנְאָה נַפְשִׁי הִיוּ עָלַי לְטָרַח נִלְאִיתִי נֶשְׂאָה. וּבְכַרְשֵׁיכֶם כִּפִּיתֶם אֲעֲלִים עֵינַי מִכֶּם גַּם כִּי תִרְבוּ תִפְלֵה אֵינְנִי שְׁמַע יְדֵיכֶם דְּמַיִם מְלֹאוּ. רַחֲצוּ הַזְּכוֹת הַסִּירוּ רַע מֵעַלְלֵיכֶם מִנְגִּד עֵינַי חֲדְלוּ הָרַע. לְמַדּוּ הֵיטֵב דְרָשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁרוֹ חִמוּץ שִׁפְטוֹ יְתוֹם רִיבוֹ אֶלְמָנָה.

ישעיהו א:יא-יז

What a powerful rebuke! HaShem is telling the people He doesn't desire their sacrifices and He doesn't want their prayers because they are worthless until there is harmony between His children. Until His children can look out for one another and care about one another's well-being, HaShem can't find His place. He can't find rest within a restless nation and He can't find peace among a peace-less people.

Learning to love another, even those who we disagree with, those whose opinions may differ greatly from our own, and those with different religious backgrounds, can be a daunting and difficult task. But, if we want to see the Beit HaMikdash rebuilt, we must overcome this challenge. As Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, first Chief Rabbi of Israel, famously wrote:

If we were destroyed, and the world with us, due to

ואם נחרבנו, ונחרב העולם עמנו, על ידי שנאת חנם, נשוב להבנות, והעולם עמנו

baseless hatred, then we shall rebuild ourselves, and the world with us, with baseless love — ahavat chinam.

Orot HaKodesh vol. III, p. 324

יבנה, על ידי אהבת חנם.
אורות הקודש, חלק ג' עמ' שכד

Rav Kook takes it even one step further saying that there's actually no such thing as "*ahavat chinam*- baseless love." Why should we regard love of another Jew as baseless?! The mere fact that someone is a Jew should be reason enough to love him or her, after all, we refer to ourselves in our *tefillot* as "*acheinu kol beit Yisrael*-our brothers, the entire family of Israel."

But how do we put this into practice? How do we apply this to each of our own communities? Are there not people in our lives whom it is difficult to like, and even more so to love?

While my husband was studying for his *semikha* at Yeshiva University, in one of the classes he was taking, they were discussing how to deal with difficult congregants or community members. Rabbis are human too and may find that certain members of their communities are irritating or bothersome, and a student asked how they were to deal with that. The teacher thought for a moment and replied, "You don't need to like all your congregants, you only need to love them." After the initial confusion at this seemingly backward statement wore off, the point this seasoned shul rabbi was trying to make became clear. Rabbis—and all other people for that matter—don't have the responsibility to like and enjoy the company of each of their congregants or community members but rather, we each have a responsibility to see past the flaws of those around us and love each individual we come into contact with simply because he or she is our Jewish brother or sister.

It would seem that this is the essence of *ahavat Yisrael*-love of Israel. G-d is not asking of us that we like people whose character and behavior we may find distasteful, what He is however demanding and expecting of us is that we love the person nonetheless, just as we would with our own family. When we can each learn to do this—remove baseless hatred from our hearts and mind, and replace it with a love for all Jews—then we will finally have corrected the sin of our ancestors and be worthy of rebuilding the Beit HaMikdash.

There's a beautiful story of a chassid who went to the Rebbe with a question he'd been wanting to ask for a long while, "Rebbe, why does Moshiach not come? I can see that maybe in the past, the world wasn't ready, it wasn't the right time. But now, after the Holocaust and the return of Jews to their land, has the time not come?" The Rebbe continued to gaze at the student and asked him to go on. The student continued, "Doesn't the Talmud teach us that one day a King will rise up against the Jewish people whose decrees will be as evil as Haman's- and did that not happen with Hitler and his wicked decrees? And didn't Moshe teach us that at the end of exile HaShem will gather us in even though we've been banished to the most distant lands? And has this not occurred too, with Jews returning to Israel from more than a hundred different lands? Why then does Moshiach not come?"

"I'll tell you, my son", said the Rebbe. "How could he come? If he was a chassid of one sect, the chassidim of the other sects wouldn't recognize him. If he were orthodox, the Reform Jews wouldn't recognize him. If he was secular, the religious Jews would not recognize him. So how then can he come? But now I will tell you a great secret. It is not we who are waiting for Moshiach. It is Moshiach who is waiting for us. He has been here all the time, and it is we who are

not yet ready for him.” Before the student could reply, the Rebbe continued. “Now let me ask you a question. What would you do if Moshiach did come? Would you greet him as you would a long-lost, long-awaited friend? Would you not invite him and treat him like a royal guest and treat him with the utmost honour and respect?” The student was shocked, “Of course I would. Can the Rebbe doubt that?”

“Well” said the Rebbe, “I’ll tell you then what you must do and teach others. Regard every person you meet- familiar or stranger, young or old, observant or not, learned or unlearned-as if they might be the Moshiach, for Moshiach will arrive in disguise. And if we would do this, we would find that even without maybe realizing it, Moshiach had come”.

On this Tisha B’av—a day on which we continue to mourn the destruction and lack of rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash because of the sin of *sinat chinam*—may we find our own strength and ability to treat each person we meet, and the individuals in our communities, as loved family members, and through this merit the coming of Moshiach and the building of the third Beit HaMikdash.

Optimism in the Face of Tragedy

Avital Weissman

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When we think about Tisha B’Av, most often we highlight the sorrow and tragedy experienced by our ancestors when the two *Batei Mikdash* were destroyed. Many of us experience that sorrow and tragedy as our own. When we read through the Book of Eicha we feel firsthand the tragedy and sorrow that befell our nation. When we read through the *Kinot* we see the effort on behalf of our great rabbis and sages to internalize the sorrow of the *Churban haBayit*, the destruction of the Temple. We additionally see the effort to make the tragedy our own in every generation, not merely an echo of a past event that we commemorate.

Similarly, we recite *Kinot* not only about the *Churban haBayit*, but about the tragedies of every generation: the Crusades, the pogroms, the Chelmniski Masacres, and, of course, the Holocaust. In past years, working in summer camps on the *chinuch* (educational) staff, I have always faced the problem of how to make the *Kinot* in particular and Tisha B’Av as a whole more meaningful to our children. I have discovered that the best way for children to gain a better understanding and attachment to the sorrow and tragedy of the *Beit haMikdash* is by relating it to current tragedies happening in our own time such as terrorism in Israel, anti-Semitism in our own communities, or other tragedies with which our children may have more experience. This helps to bring home the message and feeling of Tisha B’Av, so many years removed from the destruction.

However, of all the *Kinot*, the *Kinah* of *Arzei haLevanon*, the *Kinah* describing in horrific detail the death of the *Asarah Harugei Malchut*, the Ten Martyrs, composed by Rabbi Meir ben Yehiel stands out for its timeless power. The main focus of this *Kinah* is on the destruction of the *Gedolei Torah*, the righteous of our nation, as the *Kinah* states: “טהורי לב קדושים מתו במיתה” – “pure of heart and consecrated, they suffered a harsh death”. Listening to the

descriptions of the deaths of these ten great men and leaders can bring anyone to tears. But every year as I read this *Kinah*, I am struck not only by the tragedy but by the optimism. Reading the individual stories, we see that not a single martyr bemoaned his death. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel stretched out his neck and offered himself for sacrifice. Rabbi Yishmael mourned over Rabban Gamliel, not over his own imminent execution. Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua was reciting Kiddush, fulfilling a mitzvah with his final breath. Most evident is Rabbi Akiva who embraces his fate with unparalleled perspective.

Rabbi Akiva was murdered when his body was raked with iron combs. His students witnessed the atrocity. Rabbi Akiva during his punishment was crying out the words of Shema. His students questioned, "Rabbi Akiva, why are you crying Shema and with such joy and gusto?" He responded, "I have never had the opportunity to say Shema with such complete devotion! In Shema we say that we love Hashem with all our hearts and all our souls. Now, finally, I have the opportunity to demonstrate the true meaning of this statement and I can love Hashem with all my heart and all my soul!"

Rabbi Akiva was an optimist even in death, a characteristic that defined him in life as well. In the Gemara, *Makot 24 a - b*, there is a description of a group of rabbis when they witnessed the destruction of Yerushalayim:

Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah and Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Akiva were walking on the road, and they heard the noise of the crowds at Rome [travelling] from Puteoli, a hundred and twenty miles away. They all fell down crying, but Rabbi Akiva laughed. They said to him: Why are you laughing? He said to them: Why are you crying? They said: These heathens who bow down to images and burn incense to idols live in safety and ease, whereas our Temple, the 'Footstool' of our God is burnt down by fire, and we should not cry? He responded to them: for the same reason I am laughing! If they that offend Him fare this way, how much better shall fare they that do obey Him!

כבר היה ר"ג ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי יהושע ורבי עקיבא מהלכין בדרך, ושמעו קול המונה של רומי מפלטה [ברחוק] מאה ועשרים מיל, והתחילו בוכין, ורבי עקיבא משחק. אמרו לו: מפני מה אתה משחק? אמר להם: ואתם מפני מה אתם בוכים? אמרו לו: הללו כושיים שמשתחוים לעצבים ומקטרים לעבודת כוכבים יושבין בטח והשקט, ואנו בית הדום רגלי אלהינו שרוף באש ולא נבכה? אמר להן: לכך אני מצחק, ומה לעוברי רצונו כך, לעושי רצונו על אחת כמה וכמה.

Again, in this Gemara, we are witness to Rabbi Akiva's characteristic optimism. The other rabbis, upon hearing the cheers of the Romans are distraught and begin to mourn because the Jewish nation cannot worship Hashem but the Romans are joyous in their defeat. Rabbi Akiva, on the other hand, sees the joyful cries of the Romans as a reason to laugh, because if they who do not serve Hashem can be so great, imagine the greatness of those who do serve Hashem!

The Gemara continues on to relate Rabbi Akiva's optimism:

Once again they were coming up to Jerusalem together. As they approached Har HaTzofim, Mount Scopus they tore their clothes. As they approached the Temple Mount, they saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. They began to weep. Rabbi Akiva was laughing. They said to him, Why are you laughing?

שוב פעם אחת היו עולין לירושלים, כיון שהגיעו להר הצופים קרעו בגדיהם. כיון שהגיעו להר הבית, ראו שועל שיצא מבית קדשי הקדשים, התחילו הן בוכין ור"ע מצחק. אמרו

He responded to them, "Why are you crying?" They said to him: A place of which it was once said, "And the stranger who comes near shall surely die" is now a home to foxes, and should we not cry? He responded to them: Therefore I am laughing; for it is written, "And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the cohen, the priest, and Zechariah the Son of Jeberechiah". Now what is the connection between Uriah the cohen and Zechariah, the prophet? Uriah lived during the times of the first Temple, while Zechariah lived during the second Temple; but the Navi 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 said the Lord of Hosts, There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Yerushalayim. So long as Uriah's [threatening] prophecy had not yet been fulfilled, I worried that Zechariah's prophecy might, too, not be fulfilled; now that Uriah's prophecy has been fulfilled, it is quite certain that Zechariah's prophecy will also be fulfilled! The others said back to him: Akiva, you have comforted us! Akiva, you have comforted us!

לו: מפני מה אתה מצחק? אמר להם: מפני מה אתם בוכים? אמרו לו, מקום שכתוב בו (במדבר א) והזר הקרב יומת ועכשיו שועלים הלכו בו ולא נבכה? אמר להן: לכך אני מצחק, דכתיב (ישעיהו ח) 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 נבואתו של אוריה, באוריה כתיב (מיכה ג) לכן בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש [וגו] בזכריה כתיב (זכריה ח) עוד ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלם, עד שלא נתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה - הייתי מתיירא שלא תתקיים נבואתו של זכריה, עכשיו שנתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה - בידוע שנבואתו של זכריה מתקיימת. בלשון הזה אמרו לו: עקיבא, ניחמתנו! עקיבא, ניחמתנו.

When the other rabbis began crying, they saw, as most people do, the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* as a tragedy, probably, and rightly so, as the ultimate tragedy. They could no longer comprehend life without the Holy Temple. Simultaneously, Rabbi Akiva began laughing. Most probably, the other rabbis saw this as a tremendous insult. Here they were, witnessing the downfall of our people, seeing God's angry hand reigning down upon them and Rabbi Akiva audaciously laughs?

Rabbi Akiva's answer gives an entirely new perspective on Hashem's punishment to us, His own nation. Rabbi Akiva, first questions the other rabbis back, "why are you crying?" To him the obvious response to what they see before them is laughter, not tears. He is baffled as to why the others cry. Only after hearing their answer for crying is Rabbi Akiva able to respond and explain why he laughs. We should not be utterly distressed by this destruction. True it is terrible and heart wrenching, but it is also the fulfillment of *nevuah*, of prophecy! Had the words of the Prophet not come true regarding the destruction of Yerushalayim, then there would be no chance that the words of the Prophet regarding the ultimate redemption would come true. Here we see that they too will now come true! And for this he laughed! He was excited! He sees the good in all things! The other rabbis, in turn, respond that Rabbi Akiva's hopefulness has been a source of comfort to them and they are now consoled.

Many people have learned from the example set by Rabbi Akiva when they confront sorrow and tragedy in their own lives. I have seen firsthand twice this past year where individuals have treated their sorrow and tragedy with the approach of Rabbi Akiva. Rather than becoming paralyzed by life's vicissitudes, they turned their tragedy into an opportunity for improvement.

A woman who experiences a miscarriage feels immense tragedy. For the expectant mother, there exists a sense of ethereal attachment to the unborn child. Many of the women with whom I have spoken are paralyzed by the feelings of guilt and failure in the wake of the loss. Yet, it is the women who are able to view their heinous experience as an opportunity to reach out to God, who are able to transcend the loss. One mother pointed out to me that even in the loss she felt as if God was reaching out to her. She had embraced the perspective of Rabbi Akiva.

A mother who sees her child suffer a personal tragedy is racked by feelings of grief and mourning. A child's heartbreak is often more trying upon the parent than on the child him/herself. One mother cried to me, in the wake of her child's pain, "I want to go back to yesterday. Life was so much easier yesterday". She felt the immense hurt of her young child. Although they have not yet healed and are still working through these very difficult issues, they are moving forward. Recently, the mother said to me that she begins now to see that good that has been born out of this sorrow. She has taken a step back to look at her own life and decided that she needs to refocus her efforts. She is spending more time and energy on her family and less on her busy work life. She has been given this opportunity to see her child as courageous and amazing and does not hesitate to let her little one know this on a daily basis. The mother has also been given the opportunity to grow in her own spiritual commitment, as she realizes how much worse it might have been and thanks Hashem that it is manageable. This mother, like Rabbi Akiva, has taken her own tragedy and turned it into an opportunity to grow as a person and as an *oved Hashem*, a servant of Hashem.

We ourselves have this choice in our approach to life, in particular to sorrow and tragedy. On this Tisha B'Av we should spend our time trying to make the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* our personal and current tragedy. We should do so by incorporating our own sorrows into the mourning of the *Batei haMikdash*. But should we dwell on that sorrow? Should we live in tragedy? Or should we use the tragedy as an opportunity to find redemption, to find the fulfillment of prophecy? Our individual and communal tragedy is at minimum a way of making us stronger and more devoted to Hashem. Although it is difficult, it is often easier to dwell on how bad things are; we all need to take the time on this Tisha B'Av to look around us and find strength in our sorrow. I now, personally, have the inspiration to look to Tisha B'Av with different eyes this year. I do not see it merely as a day of mourning, but I also see Tisha B'Av as a day of opportunity to open my eyes and see what I have before me and to thank Hashem for all of it. I have the opportunity to say that all the trouble and sorrow that we go through is a part of the prophecy and now we are ready and waiting for the fulfillment of the other part of the prophecy, of the redemption. We need to be like Rabbi Akiva, who laughs when seeing foxes emerging from the Holy of Holies because we need to understand that this is a fulfillment of prophecy and therefore Hashem is required to fulfill the ultimate prophecy of *Geula shelema*, the ultimate redemption as well. *B'mehera b'yamenu*, speedily in our days we should witness the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah.

Alignment in Language is our Alignment as a People

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Experience is how we engage with the world around us; the exchange of verbal, non-verbal, and sensory input are interpreted by each of us, individually, into what we see as our world. No two people have the exact same life experience and those with like experiences may interpret the experience differently. As Jews, we are unique in that our lives revolve around laws, values, and character traits that provide a similar shaped lens of experience. Through our like view, we have similar alignment. Our communal interpretation is how we understand each other; in essence, a form of language that fosters our similarity.

Tisha B'Av offers each of us the opportunity to reflect on our many experiences and these reflections are how we facilitate language within the world around us. The lens by which we look, must align with our values of appreciation for what *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* (the Holy One Blessed Be He) has created for us. We must do this because even the complexity of our wisdom, physical and emotional intake of experiences, and our ability to interpret these, must be appreciated as a gift previously given by *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Let us take for a moment our first experience immediately after birth. As infants, we know to use our bodily senses in order to discover and cling onto our mothers so that we may achieve the sustenance of milk that will come to nurture us. In order to do this, we, by nature, use the senses of smell, touch, and taste to discover the kindness that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has provided in sculpting our method of birth and sustenance. (*Chovos HaLevavos, Shaar HaBechinah* by *OhrAvigdor*, P.116) As for all experiences, appreciating and interpreting the experience occurs later in life. This instinctive response is a pleasantry that can only be appreciated at a distance. Later life experiences, through implementation of our values and traits, will build a lens of similarity to reflect on this service.

Through our *Mesorah* (heritage), *Chazal* (our sages) have laid a foundation to describe our experiences as a people. During the recitation of *tefillah* (prayer), *Tehillim* (Psalms), and other relevant works that are *kodesh* (sanctified), we become engaged with these previous experiences and are able to reflect and align their application to our current experiences. How often do our lives relive the reflection of Dovid HaMelech, (King David) “our mouths will fill with laughter, and our tongues with singing” (*Tehillim*, 126:2), as the foundation of our current experiences of *simcha* (joy) whether great or small. If not for this reflection and positive application of language viewed through observance of Jewish values, how foul would we leave the taste of our current experiences? Was it not precisely this lack of positive application of our language that is noted as the cause for the loss of our precious second *Bais Hamikdash* (Holy Temple)?

On Tisha B'Av, as we mourn our losses, we might ask: how do we find this positive application of language? A question Dovid HaMelech (King David) has asked before: “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? 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 chief’s joy” (*Tehillim*, 137:4-6). During this time, we are lost. We could sit and cry, and mourn, and we do. Yet, throughout this mourning experience, we are a united people; individually we experience life, united we must continue to support each other in *galus* (Diaspora). Rather than stand as an individual we must cling together to experience our living

Mesorah. HaKadosh Baruch Hu has given us the responsibility to find the *simcha* within the mourning, to experience both, in the unison of life.

This simultaneous application can only be fostered with the connection of the *klal* (unification of the People) through the language of our lives, the language of experience. We must remember all the experiences we have had as a people, establishing us as *Klal Yisrael* and connecting us to our home in Eretz Yisrael. We do this by connecting both individually and together as a united community worthy of the title *Klal Yisrael* (the entire Jewish people).

In our reflections on Tisha B'Av, we must create a dialogue, which will facilitate the development of the language we elicit. We seek to bridge our previous and present experiences into the character of the people we are as individuals in order to bring together a united community. We, as a people, recognize that regardless of our application or our ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as Jews, we are one of *Klal Yisrael*. Our spiritual connection is recited using the verbal passage "*HaMakom yenachem otcha b'soch shaar avelei Tzion V'Yerushalayim*" "May you be comforted among the mourners of Tzion and Jerusalem". At a time of loss, we mourn as a nation, not as individuals. No matter where or when one experiences personal loss of family, this verse is recited in the house of the mourner. On Tisha B'Av, we are all mourners. We mourn our loss of connection to our brethren and our *Bayis* (home). Let us all speak, act, and accept the responsibility to hear and support each other to strive for growth as a people. For this, we must develop and make use of our similarities through our language.

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כל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בשמחתה

Tisha B'Av Live Webcast • Sunday, July 29, 2012

www.YUTorah.org/TishaBav



with Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

*Senior Scholar, Center for the Jewish Future and
University Professor of Jewish History and Jewish
Thought, Yeshiva University*

8:30am Shacharit

9:15am Opening shiur

**Exile or Redemption?
Current Reality and
Mourning for the Churban**

**The Halachic Status of
Tisha B'Av Nidcheh**

11:00am Kinot recital and discussion

5:00pm Mincha



Congregation
Keter Torah



Yeshiva University
CENTER FOR THE JEWISH FUTURE

Congregation Keter Torah, 600 Roemer Avenue, Teaneck, NJ
For more information, please call 212.960.5400 x 5313