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The first and central kinah for Tisha b'Av is Megillat Eicha. The Talmud (*Baba Batra* 14a) even refers to Eicha 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* (Bereishit 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 Bereishit 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 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* (diaspora) to *geulah* (redemption).

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 reflective three weeks and a meaningful Tisha b'Av fast.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

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

Tisha B'Av: Hope in the Face of Sorrow¹

Rabbi Elchanan Adler

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

Tisha B'Av Musings of a Young Holocaust Victim

On Tisha B'Av, 5703 (1943), 16-year-old Moshe Flinker penned the following words in his personal diary:

On this day we recall all our people, from the defenders of the walls of Jerusalem to the victims of the Gestapo, who have fallen in the name of their people and their Lord. On this day our thoughts go to all our people, wherever they may be, and especially to that part of our precious few who bear the greatest and heaviest load of the burden of exile. ... On this Tisha B'Av of the year 5703 our eyes shall fill with tears but we shall not cast down our heads. Our troubles and our plight shall replace our prayers, and they shall come before the throne of the Lord to intercede for His people. On this memorial day we shall lift our heads and straighten our backs, for we most assuredly know that the blood of our people which has run like water, will not remain unavenged; vengeance shall certainly be exacted. On Tisha B'Av 5703 the only prayer which we lay at the feet of the Lord is that the magnitude of His mercy will equal the immensity of the troubles which have assailed and continue to assail our unfortunate people.

Moshe Flinker, an Orthodox Jewish teenager, composed these words while residing with his family in a Belgian suburb. Sadly, he, along with his parents, perished in Auschwitz. But his diary, discovered after the war, reveals a sensitive, contemplative youth, imbued with immense love for his people and enormous spiritual anguish over their plight. The diary was published by Yad Vashem in 1958 in the original Hebrew under the title *Hana'ar Moshe: Hayoman shel Moshe Flinker*, and an English translation appeared in 1965 as *Young Moshe's Diary*.

The sentiment captured by young Moshe Flinker—that the commemoration of Tisha B'Av encompasses the collective suffering of Jews throughout the millennia—is particularly relevant to our times, when Holocaust studies have assumed a universal-humanistic tone in many quarters, and the unique spiritual and religious components of the Shoah are either ignored or played down. Moreover, the link between Tisha B'Av and Jewish suffering takes on a special poignancy in light of the ongoing Palestinian terror campaign against our people, along with the larger trend of escalating anti-Semitism in Europe and across the globe. Though Moshe Flinker's Tisha B'Av entry was

¹ This article was adapted from a lecture delivered on Tisha B'Av 5762 (2002) at the Holocaust Resource Center of the JCC in Clifton, NJ.

penned some 70 years ago, words not too different might well be written today by some other “young Moshe” trying to come to grips with recent events in Eretz Yisroel and the world at large.

This article is entitled “Tisha B’Av: Hope in the Face of Sorrow.” But in order to understand how Tisha B’Av inspires hope—and to experience this hope in its fullest sense—it is first necessary to embrace the sorrow. To do so, we must explore the implications of the relationship between Tisha B’Av and Jewish suffering.

Jewish Suffering and Martyrdom: A Trans-generational Holistic Perspective

From a strictly historical perspective, the events of world history in general—and Jewish history in particular—are seen as proceeding in linear fashion. Each period—each event—is analyzed discretely in terms of its own unique set of historical forces and circumstances. However, on a religious and metaphysical plane, events separated from each other by vast spans of time and place may be viewed as joined together and as echoing one another.

This concept is perhaps captured in a phrase that appears in the prayer known as “*Av Harachamim*.” The prayer was composed during the Middle Ages in memory of the *kedoshim*, the martyrs, individuals and communities who perished *al kiddush Hashem*, for the sanctification of G-d’s name. In referring to these martyrs, the prayer utilizes an expression that, at first glance, poses some grammatical difficulty—“*shemasru nafsham al kedushas Hashem*”—“who surrendered their souls for the sanctification of G-d’s name.” The problem is that the term “*nafsham*,” taken literally, means “their soul”—in the singular form. A more precise phrase would have employed the plural form—“*shemasru nafshoseihem*,” “who surrendered their souls.” Apparently, the author of this prayer wished to convey the idea that each individual act of martyrdom should be viewed as part of a greater whole. In a metaphysical sense, all of these martyrs, wherever and in whatever generation they perished, were somehow united on a spiritual level as they surrendered their collective soul to their Maker.

The same can be said about the bitter saga of Jewish suffering over the course of the millennia. All expressions of Jewish suffering transcend their immediate context—and not just because history may repeat itself—but because theologically, they are all inextricably linked. This sublime notion was also grasped by young Moshe Flinker, who expressed it most profoundly in his diary entry of Dec. 12, 1942:

All our troubles, from our first to this most terrible one, are multiple and endless, and from all of them rises one gigantic scream. From wherever it emanates, the cry that rises is identical to the cries in other places or at other times.

Tisha B’Av as the Quintessential Framework for Viewing Jewish Suffering

The Talmud (*Rosh Hashana* 18b) speaks of Tisha B’Av as “*yom shehuchpelu bo tzaros*,” a day in which tragedies were compounded. The Mishna in *Ta’anis* (26b) enumerates five calamities that occurred on Tisha B’Av. The first was the Divine decree to deny the Jews in the wilderness

entry into the land of Israel in the wake of the disheartening report brought by 10 of the spies who had been sent to scout out the land. Next, the Mishna lists the destruction of the two *batei mikdash*—the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. Fourth, the Jewish stronghold of Beitar fell to the Romans approximately 52 years after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. Fifth, the city of Jerusalem was ploughed over like a field—down to its foundations.

But the list does not end here. Historically, many more Jewish—and world—tragedies have occurred on or around Tisha B'Av—most notably, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. In addition, the outbreak of World War I—the aftermath of which sowed the seeds of German instability that set the stage for World War II and its tragic consequences for our people—took place on August 1, 1914, which, in that year, coincided with Tisha B'Av.

In light of the repeated calamities that occurred on Tisha B'Av, little wonder that this day has become synonymous with Jewish tragedy as a whole and is associated even with tragic events that have taken place on other days, since all expressions of Jewish suffering are interrelated. Thus, the traditional kinos recited on Tisha B'Av include accounts of the pillaging of Jewish communities and the massacre of Jews during the First and Second Crusades as well as the public burning of Torah scrolls and Jewish manuscripts in France in 1242. And in recent years, special kinos have been composed to mourn the Shoah, and some of these have been incorporated in the Tisha B'Av liturgy.

To view all manifestations of Jewish tragedy as interrelated and to link the history of Jewish suffering with Tisha B'Av should certainly not lead us to lose sight of the uniqueness of the individual episodes or to blur the distinctions between them. To properly mourn or empathize with any loss, it is obviously necessary to be acquainted with the specific circumstances of each situation. To overlook context is, to some degree, to trivialize, *chas veshalom*, the nature of the suffering. There is no doubt that the scope of the horrors that were experienced 70 years ago must stand out as unique. In our own time, the emergence of the suicide bomber who inflicts instant death and injury of ghastly proportions on unsuspecting, defenseless victims is also a phenomenon that is unprecedented.

Yet as we view each tragedy, we are impelled to focus not only on its manifest uniqueness but also on its rootedness in Tisha B'Av, the archetypal day commemorating Jewish suffering over the millennia.

Echoes of Yirmiyahu's Laments in Modern Times

If we listen intently to the voice of Yirmiyahu Hanavi bemoaning the destruction of Jerusalem—with the haunting words “*Eicha yashva vadad*,” “Alas, she sits in solitude”—we can also hear that “*Eicha*” reverberate throughout the ages. One of the first documented eye-witness accounts of Nazi atrocities during World War II appeared in a letter written by my maternal grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Meir Pomerance *zatzal*, a disciple of the saintly Chofetz Chayim, who served in 1939 as the Rav of a small town near the Polish-German border called Brok. The letter, which was sent to the *Broker Landsleit* residing in the United States, was printed in the Yiddish daily *Morgen Journal* on November 30, 1939, and was appropriately entitled “*Der ‘Eicha’ oif dem churban fun a Yiddishe shtetl in Poilin*”—“The ‘*Eicha*’ on the destruction of a Jewish town in

Poland.” Indeed, there have been countless bastions of Torah—“miniature Jerusalems,” repositories of long and proud legacies of Jewish tradition—that have been laid waste throughout the ages by the enemies of Klal Yisroel, upon which this same lament might be uttered: “*Eicha yashva vadad*,” “Alas! She dwells in solitude!”

In another lament beginning with the word “*Eicha*”—“*Eicha yu’am zahav*,” “Alas, the gold is dimmed!,” Yirmiyahu eulogizes the righteous King Yoshiyahu. He had been an extraordinary king who had sparked a spiritual revolution among masses of Jews. Yet he met an untimely and tortured end, having been pierced by 300 enemy arrows. Indeed, there were countless other “Yoshiyahu personalities” throughout the ages for whom such a lament might also be uttered—“*Eicha yu’am zahav*”—“Alas, the gold is dimmed!”

Yirmiyahu bitterly describes the image of little children who turn pathetically to their mothers for solace that never comes. This portrait of grief may readily apply not only to the young victims in Jerusalem during the time of Yirmiyahu but to all the uncomforted children throughout our history who were orphaned—including those in the Shoah—and more recently in Israel’s battles for survival and in the recurrent waves of terrorism.

Yirmiyahu describes Israel’s enemy taking sadistic pleasure at Israel’s misfortune—“*vayesamach alayich oyev*” (Eicha 2:17). These words, too, echo through the ages. Suffice it to recall the arch that Titus erected in Rome depicting his military triumph over the Jewish nation, the Nazi plan to establish a museum in Prague as a cruel testament to the Jewish race that they hoped to extinguish, and recent Palestinian exhibits and glorification of the terrorists who perpetrated the murder and maiming of so many Jewish men, women and children.

When Yirmiyahu cries out “*Sechi u’ma’os tesimeinu bekerev ha’amim*”—“You made us as filth and refuse among the nations” (Eicha 3:45)—we think of the long, unbroken chain of anti-Semitism culminating in the Shoah, along with its modern-day manifestations as displayed, for example, in the Durban conferences and other UN-sponsored initiatives.

Yirmiyahu’s voice continues to ring for us today, loud and clear. While the circumstances may differ, the lessons are timeless.

Churban Beis Hamikdash and its Cataclysmic Fallout

All that we mourn on Tisha B’Av is, of course, intertwined with one overarching loss—the loss experienced as a result of *churban Beis Hamikdash*, the destruction of the Temple. In essence, the totality of Jewish suffering can be subsumed under *churban Beis Hamikdash*. This is because *churban Beis Hamikdash* entailed far more than the mere destruction of a majestic building. *Churban Beis Hamikdash* represented the loss of spiritual innocence. It represented the degradation of the Jewish nation—the tainting of *kevod ha’uma hayisre’eilis*, of our national dignity.² Moreover, it represented *chilul Hashem*, a desecration of G-d’s name of staggering proportions—“*Lama yomru ha-goyim ayei eloheihem*,” “Why should the nations say: Where is their G-d?” (Tehillim 79:10). Even on a purely physical level, our Sages teach us that *churban*

² On Rosh Hashana, we pray for its restoration when we say “*uvechein tein kavod Hashem le’amecha*, Grant, O Lord, honor to your people.”

Beis Hamikdash caused a blockage in the natural channel through which blessing is said to flow into the universe.

Thus, the root of all Jewish suffering—and to a large extent, all human suffering— can be traced to *churban Beis Hamikdash*. It was that event, more than any other, that made possible all subsequent travail. Only when the void created by *churban Beis Hamikdash* is filled will the Jewish people, and the world at large, experience healing.

This is why we continue to mourn the loss of the *Beis Hamikdash* every year. For in mourning *churban Beis Hamikdash*, we thereby also mourn its tragic fallout that continues to affect us to the present.

We cry over our loss of spiritual innocence—for the dearth of true Torah personalities whose absence the Talmud (*Rosh Hashana* 18b) equates with the destruction of the Temple:

The death of the righteous is equivalent to the destruction of the Temple.

שקולה מיתתן של צדיקים כשריפת בית אלקינו.

We cry for the continuing and intensifying degradation of the Jew in the eyes of the world.

We cry for the terrible *chilul Hashem* that results from the vandalizing, in Europe and elsewhere, of shuls and Jewish cemeteries and the desecration of sifrei Torah.

And we cry for the precarious state of the world since 9/11 and through the "Arab Spring" and beyond.

True, we have been privileged to experience tremendous Divine grace in the aftermath of the Shoah. We have been privileged to witness the renewal of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel, and the return of so many of our brethren to our ancient homeland—a measure of *kibbutz goluyos* that could scarcely have been dreamed of in earlier years. We have witnessed the reunification of Yerushalyim, access to our holy sites, and a burgeoning of yeshivos and Torah institutions unparalleled in many centuries. But despite all this, we recognize how vulnerable we still are. Our hold over our land—over the Me'aras Hamachpeila in Chevron, Kever Rachel in Beis Lechem, even Yerushalayim and Har Habayis—is far from secure. Jewish blood continues to flow. And in the Diaspora, assimilation among the vast majority of our brothers and sisters is as rampant as ever. And so we continue to mourn each year, aware that our sorrow is somehow inextricably linked to the long trail of Jewish suffering that is rooted in *churban Beis Hamikdash*.

Zoche Veroeh Besimchasa:

Mourning the *Churban* and its Cathartic Epiphany

And then something dramatic happens, something cathartic. Out of the midst of the intense grief engendered by Tisha B'Av, a ray of light emerges that allows us to experience a small taste of consolation. Our Rabbis (*Ta'anis* 30b) allude to this phenomenon in the following teaching:

One who mourns for Jerusalem merits to see its rejoicing. | כל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בשמחתה.

On a simple level, this statement holds out a guarantee that one who mourns for Jerusalem will eventually merit to see it rebuilt—whether in one's lifetime or after the resurrection of the dead.

However, the choice of words employed by our Sages is most revealing—“*zoche veroeh besimchasa*”—literally, “he merits and sees in her rejoicing.” The Gemara employs the present tense—“*zoche vero’eh*”—literally, “merits and sees,” rather than the future tense “*yizke veyir’eh*,” he will merit to see.” Apparently our Rabbis wished to convey a very profound idea: that the process of mourning for Jerusalem can, in and of itself, produce a therapeutic effect through which one begins to experience a glimpse of Jerusalem’s ultimate joy—not at some future time but in the present moment. If the colloquial expression affirms that “seeing is believing,” our Rabbis wish to teach us that the converse may be even more valid: “believing is seeing.” One who truly mourns for Jerusalem and holds out a constant vision of its former glory is blessed with a premonition of that blissful state for which he so passionately yearns.

Nechama: A Shifting of Perspective

This cathartic experience of “*zoche vero’eh besimchasa*”—in the present tense—is closely associated with a phenomenon known as “*nechama*,” commonly translated as “consolation.” The motif of *nechama* is embedded within Tisha B’Av ritual and liturgy but only emerges after midday of Tisha B’Av. This is why after *chatzos* (midday), some of the Tisha B’Av restrictions are lifted. Also, the Mincha *Amida* includes the prayer of *Nachem*, which asks for consolation; a theme that is omitted during Shacharis. Let us understand the message of *nechama* that is inherent in Tisha B’Av.

In truth, there is something very puzzling about associating *nechama* with Tisha B’Av afternoon. The Gemara (*Ta’anis* 29a) tells us that it was on the eve of the ninth of Av that the Beis Hamikdash was set aflame and it was over the course of the next two days—the ninth day of Av through the tenth—that it was completely consumed by the flames. Based on this, Rabbi Yochanan observed that had he been present at that time, he would have ordained that the day of mourning be the tenth of Av rather than the ninth. The Rabbis, however, who selected the ninth of Av, did so because it was on the eve of the ninth that the process of destruction had begun. Even so, in view of the fact that much of the Beis Hamikdash continued to burn throughout the afternoon of the ninth, does it not seem incongruous that precisely this period should be designated as *nechama*?

The answer may lie in the etymology of the word *nechama*, which, apart from its common meaning, “consolation,” also implies “reconsideration.” For example, in the aftermath of the sin of the golden calf we read (Shemos 32:14) “*vayinachem Hashem al hara’ah asher diber la’asos l’amo*,” “Hashem *reconsidered*—changed His mind, as it were—concerning the evil that he had originally sought to do to his nation.”

Why is the Hebrew word for “consolation” identical with that of “reconsideration?” The answer is because the essence of consolation is the ability to shift perspective—to look at the same reality and to “reconsider,” to see it in a different light. While from an earlier perspective, a tragedy might be viewed in stark “black and white” terms—as senseless and meaningless—*nechama* allows for shades of gray, leading one to perceive a silver lining within the depth of the suffering. While a painful void and gnawing questions still remain, the spirit of *nechama* begins to uncover Divine grace, permitting people to discern the hidden hand of Providence underlying

the apparent madness, and encouraging them to use the painful experience as an impetus to move forward creatively. In short, *nechama* connotes the ability to reconsider. Although externally nothing may have changed, and things may, on occasion, even seem worse, internally, a transformation has taken place in the meaning that one assigns to this harsh reality.

Shafach Chamaso Al Eitzim Va'avanim:

Discovering the Silver Lining

Chazal (Eicha Rabbah 4:14) identify what is perhaps the quintessential element in the process of *nechama* for *churban Beis Hamikdash*—namely, the fact that while the physical structure of the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, the Jewish people, as a whole, survive. G-d poured out his wrath on the wood and stones that comprised the physical structure of the Temple—but it could have been far worse. The awareness that the Temple was the target of the punishment while the people were spared is the theme that lies at the heart of *nechama*. It represents the shift in perspective that brings with it a measure of consolation as we come to grips with the tragedy of *churban Beis Hamikdash*.

It is precisely for this reason, the Gaon of Vilna explains (OC 555:1), that the period after midday on the ninth of Av was designated as a time for *nechama*. It was then, while the Temple burnt to a crisp, that the “silver lining” of “*shafach chamaso al eitzim va'avanim*,” “He poured out his wrath on the wood and stones,” became apparent. As tragic and painful as things were, a renewed perspective allows for some consolation—in the knowledge that at the height of tragedy, Hashem made sure to spare the nation. On Tisha B'Av night and earlier on in the day, we do not allow ourselves to take such comfort. We feel devastated as we engage in tearful mourning and recite the kinos. But somehow, as a result of this process, we are suddenly left with a ray of hope—“*zoche ve'ro'eh besimchasa*.” We begin to detect the *chasdei Hashem*, the Divine grace, within the throes of the *churban* itself—“*shafach chamaso al eitzim va'avanim*.” This sense of *nechama* gives us the ability to move on.

Post-Shoah Aspects of Nechama

The inner transformation that occurs on Tisha B'Av with respect to *churban Beis Hamikdash*—the ability to find cause for hope in the face of sorrow—must naturally spill over into all of those tragedies for which we mourn on Tisha B'av. At first glance, the concept of “*shafach chamaso al eitzim va'avanim*” offers virtually no comfort when it comes to the Shoah. After all, in this case, the victims were, indeed, the people themselves—a staggering six million, if not more. Nevertheless, the very fact that we, as a people, did survive, the fact that we managed to rebuild out of the ashes of the Shoah, is, in itself, a measure of *nechama*. While we are still limping—and we dare not forget what was lost—we have somehow managed to survive and to thrive. We are called upon to stop and consider the truly remarkable myriad accomplishments of the State of Israel since its inception, all performed under a taxing burden of non-stop hostilities. And the rebirth of Torah institutions both in Israel and in America surely illustrates the resilience of Am Yisroel and the special *siyata dishmaya*, Divine assistance, that has guided us.

The spirit of *nechama*, of consolation and reconsideration, impels us to seek out stories of inspiration that emerged from of the Shoah—not just stories of *kiddush Hashem*, but also of *kiddush Hachayim*—of those who maintained their dignity and their faith in the face of the horrors with which they were confronted.

Nechama impels us to continue to search for the silver lining—to seek out stories of Divine Providence—in the tales of survivors who managed to escape. On a personal level, my maternal grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Meir Pomerance, who served as the last Rav in Brok, Poland, was fortunate enough to escape along with his wife and four children to America in the early part of the war. Like so many other survivors, his path was paved with miracles, from the hand grenade that was thrown into his home that was then filled with numerous families, which landed miraculously in a pail of water and did not explode, to the flight from Brok by foot where he was nearly shot, to the few days when the family was separated into two with each group unaware of the others' whereabouts, to the families' managing to miraculously obtain the visas necessary to emigrate—including the famous Sugihara transit visa. Were it not for *chasdei Hashem* that somehow protected my mother and her family, I know that I would not be here today. And the stories go on and on. Stories of this nature provide some measure of consolation and give us hope in the face of sorrow.

When we contemplate the terrible toll that Arab hostility has wrought on our brothers and sisters in Israel—and reflect on the stories of the victims and their families—those who were killed as well as those that were maimed—children left fatherless and motherless, children taken from their parents, young men and women taken from their spouses—we are left feeling numb and paralyzed, and appropriately so. But from this mourning must also emerge an element of *nechama*. *Nechama* allows us to persevere and use the pain as an impetus to grow and to inspire others and ourselves.

Timeless Words of *Chizuk* for a Grieving Child

Several years ago, I had occasion to hear Chief Rabbi Lau of Israel speak during a brief visit to the United States. He told the tragic story of the Schijveschuurder family³, who had emigrated from Holland to Israel some 22 years earlier; how the father, Mordechai (Moti) had given up his business to build a cheder in Talmon, how the mother, Tzira, would commute each day to Yerushalayim for an hour and a quarter to teach in a special school for deaf children (called *Shema Koleinu*). The Schijveschuurders had eight children. On August 9, 2001, on a Thursday afternoon, the parents, together with their five youngest children, went out to dine in the Sbarro Pizzeria in Yerushalayim. A Palestinian terrorist, strapped with explosives, walked in and detonated a bomb, killing fifteen and wounding over one hundred. Among those killed were the parents, Moti and Tzira, as well as three of the children—Ra'aya, Avraham Yitzchak and Chemda—ages 14, 4 and 2. The other two children—10-year-old Layela and 8-year-old Chayela—were badly burned and rushed to nearby Bikur Cholim hospital.

Rabbi Lau related how that evening he received a call from Tzira's sister with the heart-wrenching news—asking him to officiate the next morning at the funeral of the parents and

³ This story was later published with other details in Rabbi Lau's autobiography, *Out of the Depths*, p. 266 ff.

three children. The request was made of Rabbi Lau not in his capacity as Chief Rabbi but because of his personal relationship with the family going back many years. Rabbi Lau had, in fact, acted as *mesader kiddushin* at the parents' wedding 25 years earlier. At the *levaya* (funeral) the following morning, as Rabbi Lau was about to speak, an ambulance pulled up, and 10-year-old Layela, seriously burned and covered with bandages, was brought out on a stretcher accompanied by doctors and nurses. Layele had insisted on being present at the *levaya* of her parents and three siblings. Rabbi Lau's emotional *hesped* (eulogy) consisted of a string of biblical citations beseeching G-d to eradicate evil and to have compassion on his people.

The following Monday, Rabbi Lau visited the family's home where the three older siblings were sitting shiva. Again, an ambulance arrived carrying 10-year-old Layela who wished to join her brothers for the duration of the shiva. Before leaving, Rabbi Lau approached Layela and inquired about her younger sister, Chayela, who had not yet left the hospital. Layela tearfully told Rabbi Lau that she had last seen Chayela two hours earlier to let her know that she was going to the shiva house, how they had both cried, and that she was hopeful that Chayela would recover. Then she added: "It's good that you asked about Chayela. Because when I told her that I was coming here, she said: 'I'm sure Rav Lau will be there since he was very close to Abba and Ima. Please tell him when you see him that just as there is a mitzvah of *nichum aveilim*—consoling the bereaved—there is also a mitzvah of *bikur cholim*—visiting the sick. I hope that he will visit me too.'"

The next morning, Rabbi Lau appeared at the hospital and witnessed the sad sight of 8-year old Chayela lying in severe pain with bandages covering most of her body. Sitting at her bedside silently, Rabbi Lau noticed the child's eyes well up in tears. He turned to her and said: "Chayela, there is something that I want to tell you. I know someone who also lost his Abba and Ima suddenly when he was only 8 years old. But he was even less fortunate than you are. You have two Savtot and a Saba—two grandmothers and a grandfather—and three remaining brothers. You have people who love you and will comfort you when you leave the hospital. Even the prime minister of Israel, Arik Sharon, has come to visit you here and has brought you a *dubi* (teddy bear). But that little boy had no Saba or Savta, no friends, no one to hug him, kiss him or love him. He knew of only one surviving brother. Chayela, that little boy is now..."

But before Rabbi Lau could complete his sentence, little Chayela, with the slightest of smiles, interjected: "*Kein, ani yoda'at. Zeh ata*"—"Yes, I know, it was you."

Rabbi Lau concluded his remarks: "You see, Chayele, it is all up to you. Hakadosh Baruch Hu helps those who help themselves—as it says, "*uveirachecha bechol asher ta'aseh*"—He shall bless you in all that you do." If you wish to live and be healthy, He will help you recover and be healthy... If you wish to be happy, He will help you to be happy. If you wish to succeed in life, He will help you to succeed. Always remember my example."

This powerful vignette speaks for itself. Rabbi Lau's touching words to Chayela truly capture the essence of *nechama*.

The Challenge of Tisha B'Av: Nurturing a Vision and Maintaining Hope

Tisha B'Av offers us a powerful taste of sorrow—the sorrow of Klal Yisroel—the Jewish people throughout the ages. The river of sorrow seems endless and never ending—as Yirmiyahu Hanavi says, “*ki gadol kayam shivreich mi yirpa lach*”—“Your ruin is as vast as the sea; who can heal you?” (Eicha 2:13). But paradoxically, as we allow ourselves to feel the plight of our people, as we mourn the loss of the Beis Hamikdash and all that it entailed, we begin to taste *nechama*. Through our mourning we hold out a vision of a better future—of an Israel at peace, of a world at peace, of the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the third Temple. We begin to “see” these visions as living realities—“*zoche vero'eh besimchasa*.” This, in turn, allows us to “reconsider” those same tragedies and use them as vehicles for growth as characterized by the spirit of *nechama*. These positive steps may, in turn, be instrumental in helping to bring the ultimate redemption that much closer and making our pure vision a physical reality.

How ironic—that latent within Tisha B'Av is the potential to bring Moshiach! No wonder that Moshiach, according to our Sages, will be born on Tisha B'Av!

May we be privileged to properly mourn for Yerushalayim—to genuinely anticipate the *yeshu'as Hashem*, G-d's ultimate salvation, to yearn for it passionately—and to experience a taste of the *nechama* that makes living in an imperfect world that much easier. May this Tisha B'Av be our last as a day of sorrow with the arrival of Moshiach speedily in our days, Amen.

A Most Unusual Moed

Rabbi Josh Blass

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It goes without saying that Tisha B'Av is marked as a day of unbridled mourning and sorrow as is reflected both throughout Eicha as well as throughout numerous passages in Chazal. From Hakadosh Baruch Hu's response in the *midbar* (desert) in which Tisha B'Av was designated as a day of *bechiyah l'doros* (crying throughout the generations), through Yirmiyahu's lament of *bacho sivkeh balayla* (you shall cry at night, Eicha 1:2), and inclusive of the long list of national tragedies, Tisha B'Av has clearly become the focal point for a collective national lament.

What is less clear, and what has emerged as a fundamental dispute among the Rishonim, is an understanding as to the exact character of the sorrow which one experiences on Tisha B'Av. On the one hand, Tisha B'Av seems to share characteristics with the type of mourning that one experiences during shiva. Conversely, Tisha B'Av is referred to both in the Navi Zechariah (8:19) as well as in the Mishna and Gemara (*Ta'anis* 26b, *Rosh HaShana* 18b) as a *tzom* and a *ta'anis*—a fast day that is certainly both more intensive and nationally significant than the other rabbinic fast days, but a fast day nonetheless. Complicating the question of Tisha B'Av as a *yom aveilus* (day of mourning) versus a *yom tzom* (fast day) is the designation of the Navi of Tisha B'Av as a *moed* (Eicha 1:15)—a "festival" of sorts. The term *moed* would seem to highlight the unique nature of the day of Tisha B'Av, qua the significance of the day, as opposed to emphasizing the specific practices of mourning.

This question about the nature of Tisha B'Av, and how the term *moed* affects its halachic status, is reflected in a famous dispute. The Ramban, based on the Gemara in *Rosh HaShana* 18b, writes:

It is logical that all four fast days are considered public fasts decreed by the prophets and are subject to all of the relevant stringencies: they begin at night, and one is prohibited to bathe, anoint, wear shoes and engage in marital relations, just like Tisha B'Av, and the verse even equates them to Tisha B'Av. However, nowadays, since we live in a time that there is no [widespread] persecution, the fasts are optional, but the people wanted and accepted upon themselves the custom to fast, but they didn't accept the additional stringencies. However, the original decree required all of these [stringencies].

Toras Ha'Adam, Inyan Aveilus Yeshana

ומסתברא דכולהו ארבע צומות
תענית צבור הן, ונביאים גזרו אותם
וכל חומרי תענית עליהן, מפסיקין
בהן מבעוד יום ואסורין ברחיצה
ובסיכה ובנעילת הסנדל ובתשמיש
המטה כת"ב, וקרא מקיש להו
לתשעה באב, אלא האידנא כיון
דבזמן דליכא שמד בטילין רצו ונהגו
להתענות בהן ולא רצו לנהוג בהם
בחומרות הללו, אבל מעיקר התקנה
ודאי אסורין הן בכולן.
תורת האדם, ענין אבילות ישנה

According to Ramban, originally every fast day was observed for 24 hours, but because we are no longer subjected to persecution the three other fast days are optional. Tisha B'Av, on the other hand, because of its intensive nature, is still observed for a full 24 hours.

This analysis is questioned by the Netziv (*HaEmek She'elah* 158), who maintains that the other fast days were always observed for only a partial day, but that Tisha B'Av, due to its unique nature, was extended to an entire 24-hour period. In understanding why Tisha B'Av is viewed differently than the other fast days, our two options stated earlier reemerge. The Netziv himself follows the approach that Tisha B'Av was extended to 24 hours and was viewed with a certain stringency because fundamentally, it is a day of mourning as opposed to just a fast day.⁴ The *Sefer HaChinuch* (at the end of mitzvah 313) takes a different approach and claims that Tisha B'Av's uniqueness lies in its comparison to Yom HaKippurim. Just as it relates to Yom Kippur, in which the *itzumo shel yom*, the day itself, is significant as a day of *teshuva* and *kappara* (repentance and atonement), so too, the *Chinuch* sees Tisha B'Av as a day whose significance lies in the fact that it has been designated as a day of *ta'anis* and perhaps viewed as something of a *moed*.

This characterization of Tisha B'Av as a *moed* is reflected in a number of issues in halacha including the following:⁵

- 1) The *Shulchan Aruch* (559:4) writes:

We do not recite Tachanun on Tisha B'Av and we do not fall on our faces because it is considered a festival.

Shulchan Aruch 559:4

<p>אין אומרים תחנון בת"ב ואין נופלים על פניהם משום דמקרי מועד.</p>	<p>שלחן ערוך תקנט:ד</p>
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- 2) The *Minchas Chinuch* (toward the end of no. 313) explicitly discusses this issue in addressing the question of whether one is allowed to wash oneself with cold water on Tisha B'Av. At face value, Tisha B'Av shares similarities with a mourner who is also restricted from washing but who is permitted to wash himself with cold water. That said, Tisha B'Av, due to its status as a *moed*, is conceptually more akin to Yom HaKippurim in which all washing, even with cold water, is strictly forbidden.
- 3) This issue is reflected, perhaps less explicitly, in a different discussion of the *Minchas Chinuch*. The *Minchas Chinuch* asks whether or not there is an obligation of *tosefes Tisha B'Av* (an obligation to extend Tisha B'Av beyond its beginning and end) and that the practices of the day should begin already from *bein hashemashos* (the period between sundown and nightfall). This issue is actually raised as a questions in the Gemara in *Pesachim* (54b), and the Rambam rules that despite the fact that Tisha B'Av is only rabbinic in nature, we should in fact be stringent to begin Tisha B'Av before nightfall (nightfall is the time in which the day has definitely begun). While a mourner would only begin his *nihugei aveilus* (mourning practices) with the actual beginning of the day, if the character of Tisha

⁴ The Rambam, *Hilchos Ta'anios* 5:5 and 5:10, implies that generally, public fast days begin in the morning and that Tisha B'Av was extended to a 24-hour period.

⁵ For other issues that relate to this question, see *Mishnas Ya'avetz*, no. 46, *Avnei Shoham*, page 142 and *Mesorah*, Vol. VI page 26 in which Rav Soloveitchik lays out these positions in regard to the question of why we don't apply the principle of *miktzas hayom k'kulo* (a partial day counts as a whole day) to Tisha B'Av.

B'Av, with its *moed* motif, was more in line with Yom HaKippurim, then the requirement of *tosefes Tisha B'Av* would be eminently logical, just as there is an obligation of *tosefes Yom HaKippurim*. [In fairness, the Minchas Chinuch provides a different reason why there is *tosefes Tisha B'Av*.]

There is a more fundamental question than how the status of Tisha B'Av as a *moed* reflects itself in halacha. Why is Tisha B'Av described as a *moed* in the first place? One would be hard pressed to find any day whose character feels less like a festival than the ninth day of Av. These following four approaches can be suggested in order to resolve this conundrum:

1. The Talmud Yerushalmi in *Berachos* (2:4) as well as the Midrash *Eicha Rabba* (1:51), record that Moshiach has either been born or will be born on Tisha B'Av. The status of Tisha B'Av as a quasi-festival is reflected in the words of the *Aruch HaShulchan* (552:14) in our confidence that:

<p>[HaKadosh Baruch Hu] will still transform these days into festivals and days of rejoicing.</p>	<p>והעניין הוא לסימן כי אנו מובטחים בהשי"ת שעוד יתהפכו הימים האלה למועדים ושמחה וימים טובים.</p>
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2. The Midrash, as quoted by Tosfos (*Kiddushin* 31b), articulates the famous notion that HaKadosh Baruch Hu's wrath found its full expression on the *eitzim v'avanim*, the sticks and stones of the Beis HaMikdash, but that the nation itself was spared. The recognition of what was soon rebuilt in Bavel following *churban Bayis Rishon* and then in Yavneh after *churban Bayis Sheini*, certainly attests to Klal Yisroel's ability to restore itself to some semblance of its former glory.
3. Rav Shlomo Wolbe in *Alei Shur* (Vol. II page 411) expresses the beautiful concept that there are two distinct forms of *moed*. There is a *moed of kiruv*—a festival of coming close—marked by *aliyah laregel*, korbanos, simchas hachag and all the various forms that reflect an intimacy between G-d and the nation. There is also a *moed shel richuk*—a "festival" of distance whose character is wholly different than the *moed shel kiruv* but in many ways is even more profound. As Bnei Yisroel were leaving Yerushalayim and turned to watch the Mikdash turn to ashes, there was an immediate recognition of where they were in their lives and to what degree the *churban* was a reflection of their own actions and their disintegration as the *Am Kadosh*. Distance, both in human and Divine relations, has a redemptive quality when it brings with it the onset of self-reflection.
4. The Gemara in *Yoma* (54b) describes that upon entering the Mikdash, the Babylonians saw the *Keruvim* clinging to each other. In light of the Gemara in *Bava Basra* (99a) that states that the *Keruvim* only faced each other when the nation had done the will of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the inward facing *Keruvim* during the *churban* would seem to defy logic. The *Shitta Mekubetzes* in *Bava Basra* sees the inward facing *Keruvim* as either a reminder to the nation of the intimate relationship once shared between G-d and the nation that was now no longer, or as a means of heightening Am Yisroel's shame in their expulsion from the Mikdash and from Eretz Yisroel. One could, however, take an approach that seems somewhat more optimistic than the ones expressed by the *Shitta Mekubetzes*. The inward facing *Keruvim* speak to an eternal bond between G-d and the nation that is heightened by the *makom HaMikdash* but is certainly not limited to it. There has been a gentle but present embrace

that has ushered us through the many victories and vicissitudes of the last two millennia. By the same token we, both in thought and deed, have not turned our back on the Mikdash with its accompanying *hashra'as HaShechinah* (*Divine revelation*). Nearly two thousand years after the *churban HaBayis*, a nation, en masse, still sits on the floor, rends its garments and prays for an edifice and for a state of being that, despite the passage of time, is still very much alive for us only through the pages of *sefarim*. Perhaps that is not what Yirmiyahu meant when he described the day as a *moed*, but the experience of *aveilus yeshana*, mourning for Yerushalayim, truly highlights the best of our national spirit and in and of itself can be truly uplifting and redemptive.

In the spirit of embracing the opportunities that present themselves through tragedy and loss, we should live to fulfill the Gemara's promise that "*kol ha'misabel al Yerushalayim zoche v'roeh b'binyana*—anyone who engages in mourning for Yerushalayim will merit to see its rebuilding. (*Ta'anis* 30b)" May that happen speedily and in our days.

Fasting on Tisha B'Av

When One is Ill

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Introduction¹

There are six fast days which are considered public fast days. Yom Kippur is the only fast day recorded in the Torah (Vayikra 16:31). Shiva Asar B'Tammuz, Tisha B'Av, Tzom Gedalia and Asarah B'Tevet are recorded in Zecharia (8:19). Ta'anit Esther is based on the fast that Esther fasted (Esther 4:16) and is recorded in *Masechet Soferim* 21:1.

The fast of Tisha B'Av is the climax of the three week period of mourning. As such, it is more comparable to Yom Kippur than to the other four rabbinically enacted fast-days. This is reflected in its full 24 hour length, and its observance of all five *inuyim* (methods of infliction). With regards to someone who is ill, there is a popular notion that one may be more lenient regarding the “minor” fasts. What is the basis for this notion and is it applicable to Tisha B'Av which is also rabbinically ordained? Should one assume that Tisha B'Av should be compared to Yom Kippur, where one who is in a situation where fasting may pose a life threatening danger is permitted and required to eat, but one whose illness poses no threat to one's life may not eat? This article will discuss some of the issues that arise for one who is ill on Tisha B'Av and the relevant laws for one who is permitted/obligated to eat on Tisha B'Av.

The Basis for Leniency on the Minor Fast Days

The Gemara states:

R. Chanah b. Biznah said in the name of R. Shimon Chasida, "What is meant by the verse, 'Thus said the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness.'" The verse calls it a fast and calls it [days of] joy and gladness! [Rather,] when there is peace they will be [days of] joy and gladness and when there is no peace, [they are days of] fast. R. Papa said, this is what it means: when there is peace, they will be

אמר רב חנא בר ביזנא אמר רב שמעון חסידא מאי דכתיב כה אמר ה' צבאות צום הרביעי וצום החמישי וצום השביעי וצום העשירי יהיה לבית יהודה לששון ולשמחה. קרי להו צום וקרי להו ששון ושמחה בזמן שיש שלום יהיו לששון ולשמחה אין שלום צום אמר רב פפא הכי קאמר בזמן שיש

¹ This article is adapted from two articles written for the *B'Mesillat HaHalacha* series available on yutorah.org, “Public Fast Days” (www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/715481/) and “One who is Too Ill to Fast on Tisha B'Av” (www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/711707/).

[days of] joy and gladness and when there is persecution, [days of] fast. If there is no persecution but no peace, if they want, they can fast if they want, they don't have to fast. If so, Tisha B'Av too [fasting should be optional]? R. Papa said: Tisha B'Av is different because there were multiple tragedies.

Rosh HaShanah 18b

שלום יהיו לששון ולשמחה יש
שמד צום אין שמד ואין שלום רצו
מתענין רצו אין מתענין אי הכי
תשעה באב נמי אמר רב פפא שאני
תשעה באב הואיל והוכפלו בו
צרות.

ראש השנה ית:

Tisha B'Av is more stringent than the other three fasts mentioned by Zechariah because on Tisha B'Av there were multiple (and repetitive) tragedies. For this reason, the Gemara states that the fast of Tisha B'Av is obligatory and the other fasts are optional (when there is no national crisis).

Ramban (1194-1270), *Torat Ha'Adam* (Chavel edition, pg. 244), notes that fundamentally, all public fasts commence at sundown and last a full day. Furthermore, all of the activities that are prohibited on Tisha B'Av (washing, anointing, wearing leather shoes and marital relations) are prohibited on the other public fasts. Ramban explains that the reason why these stringencies are not practiced on the minor fasts days is that the other days are, in principle, optional fast days. While fasting on these days has become widespread practice, (and Ramban in fact maintains that it is prohibited to eat on these days now that it has become widespread), nevertheless, the widespread acceptance of these fasts was on condition that it does not entail all of the stringencies of Tisha B'Av.

Rambam (1138-1204), *Hilchot Ta'aniot* 5:5 and 5:10, implies that in principle Tisha B'Av is more stringent than the other fast days. The other fast days do not start until the morning and the only prohibition that applies on these days is eating (and drinking).

R. Yisrael M. Kagan (1838-1933), *Mishna Berurah*, *Be'ur Halacha* 550:1, discusses whether someone who has extreme difficulty fasting must fast on the minor fast days. This issue may be contingent on the dispute between Rambam and Ramban. According to Ramban, the reason why minor fast days are less stringent is because the fast days are, in principle, optional. When they were accepted as widespread practice, their acceptance was in accordance with the needs of the people. As such, it is possible that this widespread acceptance to fast did not include those who have extreme difficulty fasting. However, according to Rambam, the leniencies of the minor fasts are built into the original institution of the fast days. These minor fast days are not more lenient by nature and therefore, there is no reason to apply additional leniencies that are clearly not apparent on Tisha B'Av. *Mishna Berurah* concludes that a *posek* should deal with this issue on a case-by-case basis.

The same logic should apply to the discussion of pregnant and nursing women. The Gemara, *Pesachim* 54b, states that pregnant and nursing women are required to fast on Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av. The implication is that they are not required to fast on the other fast days. *Hagahot Maimoniot*, *Hilchot Ta'aniot* 5:1, explains that the leniency of the minor fasts is based on the optional nature of these fasts. However, this explanation is insufficient according to Rambam who does not attribute the leniencies of the minor fasts to the optional nature of these fasts.

Rambam himself implies (see *Hilchot Ta'aniot* 3:5 and 5:10) that pregnant and nursing women are exempt from fasting on the minor fast days.

Nevertheless, one can explain that the reason why pregnant and nursing women are exempt from fasting on the minor fasts is because the nature of a woman's obligation to fast is different from that of a man's. R. Yosef Rosen (1858-1936), *Teshuvot Tzafnat Panei'ach* (Dvinsk 1:13), suggests that a woman's obligation to fast on the minor fast days is similar to a private fast. He claims that Rambam's leniency for pregnant and nursing women is based on this idea. One can then explain that regarding women, Rambam will agree with Ramban that the nature of the fast is patterned according to the way it was accepted as obligation. When women accepted upon themselves to fast on the minor fast days, they did not include pregnant and nursing women.

While there is a basis for the notion that there is more room for leniency on the minor fasts for someone experiencing a minor illness or ailment, this notion is based on the assumption that the minor fasts do not have the same status as Tisha B'Av. As such, it would seem that Tisha B'Av is more comparable to Yom Kippur in this regard. Nevertheless, R. Yosef Karo (1488-1575) rules with regards to Tisha B'Av:

If a woman who gave birth in the last thirty days or an ill patient needs to eat, we don't require consultation with an expert, rather we give them food immediately because the rabbis didn't institute [a requirement to fast] in cases of illnesses.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 554:6

חיה כל שלשים יום וכן חולה שהוא צריך לאכול אין צריך אומד אלא מאכילין אותו מיד דבמקום חולי לא גזרו רבנן.
שלחן ערוך, אורח חיים תקנד:ו

The implication of *Shulchan Aruch's* ruling is that one may be lenient, even if the situation is not life-threatening. However, Rama (1520-1572) *ad loc.*, rules that in the absence of any threat to life, even if there is great distress, one should attempt to fast. Nevertheless, *Mishna Berurah* 554:16, rules that if an ill person has the status of a *choleh* (a bed-bound illness), one may be lenient, even if it is not a life-threatening situation.

Limiting Factors

Are there any limitations for one who was given the directive to eat on Tisha B'Av? *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 618:7, (based on a *Beraita* quoted in the Gemara, *Yoma* 83a) writes that one who must eat on Yom Kippur should eat in small increments if it will not pose any danger. The purpose of eating in small increments is to minimize the severity of the prohibition. Maharam Schick (1807-1879), in his *Teshuvot, Orach Chaim* no. 289, assumes that the same procedure applies to Tisha B'Av, and one should eat in increments if possible. However, R. Shlomo Z. Auerbach (1910-1995) cited in *Nishmat Avraham* IV, 554:1, and R. Shmuel Vosner (b. 1913), *Shevet HaLevi* 4:46, rule that if one is already ill, one is not required to eat in increments. If one is healthy but must eat out of concern that he will become ill, he should eat in increments. R. Eliezer Waldenberg (1915-2006), *Tzitz Eliezer* 10:25:16, implies that one is never required to eat in increments.

Even if one assumes that an ill person is not required to eat in increments, there is another limiting factor. *Hagahot Maimoniot, Hilchot Ta'aniot* 1:8 (Kushta edition), writes that one who is

permitted to eat on Tisha B'Av should not indulge in delicacies. He should only eat what is necessary for sustenance. This opinion is codified by *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 554:5*.

Special Observances for One Who is not Fasting

Maharil (c. 1365-1427), *Hilchot Shiva Asar B'Tammuz V'Tisha B'Av*, no. 11, writes that an ill person who eats bread on Tisha B'Av should recite *Nachem* in the Birkat HaMazon. [*Nachem* is the prayer that is added to the *Amidah* of Mincha.] R. Tzikiyah HaRofei (13th century), *Shibolei HaLeket*, no. 267, disagrees and maintains that one does not recite the *Nachem* prayer in Birkat HaMazon. Rama, *Orach Chaim 557:1*, rules in accordance with the opinion of Maharil that one does recite *Nachem*. *Mishna Berurah 557:5* quotes both opinions and does not rule conclusively on the matter.

When Tisha B'Av occurs on Sunday, Havdalah is postponed until after Tisha B'Av. R. Chaim Y.D. Azulai (1724-1806), *Birkei Yosef, Orach Chaim 556:2*, writes that one who is ill and is not fasting should recite Havdalah immediately after Shabbat. R. Yehoshua Y. Neuwirth, *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 62:45*, writes that *Birkei Yosef's* ruling only applies to adults who are too ill to fast. A child who is not fasting should not recite Havdalah himself on Motza'ei Shabbat, but rather wait until the conclusion of Tisha B'Av to fulfill the mitzvah of Havdalah.

May One Who is Not Fasting Receive an *Aliyah*?

On Tisha B'Av of 1811, R. Moshe Sofer (known as the Chatam Sofer, 1762-1839) was too ill to fast. He wondered whether he would be able to receive an *aliyah* for the afternoon Torah reading. A similar issue was already addressed by Maharik (c. 1420-1480) in his *Teshuvot* no. 9. Maharik notes that in many communities, when the Torah is read for the fast of *Bahab* (a series of private fasts observed by certain individuals following Pesach and Sukkot), the kohanim are asked to exit the room (if they themselves are not fasting) in order that the first *aliyah* be given to one of the individuals who are fasting. R. Yosef Karo, *Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 566*, infers from this practice that on a fast day, only one who is fasting may be called to the Torah. This inference is codified in *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 566:6*.

R. Sofer, *Teshuvot Chatam Sofer, Orach Chaim* no. 157, notes that based on the ruling of *Shulchan Aruch*, one who is too ill to fast on Tisha B'Av may not receive an *aliyah*. R. Sofer argues that there are three reasons to permit receiving an *aliyah* in such an instance. First, he disagrees fundamentally with the assumption that one who is not fasting may not receive an *aliyah*. The practice that the kohanim who are not fasting exit the room is not due to their inability to receive an *aliyah*. Rather, since they are not fasting, they do not deserve the honor normally afforded to kohanim of receiving the first *aliyah*. For this reason they are asked to exit the room in order to give the first *aliyah* to one who is fasting.

Second, the ruling of *Shulchan Aruch* that one who is not fasting may not receive an *aliyah* should only apply to a private fast such as *Bahab*. Regarding a private fast, the special Torah reading that is read in commemoration of the fast has no relevance to one who is not fasting. For this reason he may not receive an *aliyah*. However, the Torah reading of a public fast day has relevance to every member of the congregation whether he is fasting or not.

Third, even one who is too ill to fast must still observe Tisha B'Av to the extent that his illness allows. He should not eat more meals than necessary. He must still observe the other restrictions that relate to the fast. For this reason we should consider this person as one who is observing Tisha B'Av, although in a limited manner.

Despite R. Sofer's arguments to permit one who is not fasting to receive an *aliyah* on Tisha B'Av, *Mishna Berurah* 566:19, rules that one who is not fasting may not receive an *aliyah* on a fast day. The only case where he provides any grounds for leniency is regarding the Torah reading of Monday and Thursday morning. R. Avraham Gombiner (c. 1633-1683), *Magen Avraham* 566:8, rules that since the Torah is read on Monday and Thursday mornings regardless of the fast, one who is not fasting may receive an *aliyah*. Even in this instance, R. Mordechai Karmi (c. 1740-1825), *Ma'amar Mordechai* 566:5, disagrees and contends that although the Torah would have been read regardless of the fast, one who is not fasting may not receive an *aliyah* since the content of the Torah reading is for that of a fast day and not for the week's parsha. *Mishna Berurah* rules that one may be lenient if the person was already called to the Torah.

R. Moshe Shternbuch, *Teshuvot V'Hanhagot* 2:261, suggests that the Torah reading on the morning of Tisha B'Av is fundamentally different than the Torah reading of the morning of other fast days. This is implicit in the comments of Rambam who states:

On Tisha B'Av the morning Torah reading is Ki tolid banim (When you bear children, Devarim ch. 4) and the afternoon Torah reading is Vay'chal (And he pleaded, Shemot ch. 32) like all other fast days.

Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 13:18

בתשעה באב קורין בשחרית כי תוליד בנים ... ובמנחה קורין ויחל משה כשאר ימי התעניות. רמב"ם, הל' תפילה יג:יח

R. Shternbuch notes the emphasis in Rambam's language "like all other fast days," and notes that while the afternoon Torah reading of Tisha B'Av is comparable to other fast days and is a function of the fast day aspect of Tisha B'Av, the morning Torah reading is a function of the *aveilut* (mourning) aspect of Tisha B'Av. Therefore, regardless of whether one is fasting or not, one may receive an *aliyah* at the morning Torah reading on Tisha B'Av.

R. Shternbuch does not make reference to *Mishna Berurah's* omission of the leniencies of R. Sofer. Although *Mishna Berurah* does not distinguish between Tisha B'Av and other fast days, he does not explicitly rule that one who is not fasting may not receive an *aliyah* on Tisha B'Av. Therefore, one can argue that R. Shternbuch's suggestion—that one who is not fasting on Tisha B'Av may receive an *aliyah* in the morning—does not explicitly oppose the opinion of *Mishna Berurah*.

The Relationship between the Jewish People and Yerushalayim: A Historical Account of the First 400 Years

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Yerushalayim was not an obvious candidate for a major world city. No major body of water is found in its vicinity: no ocean, no sea, not even a river. The Gichon, the only permanent body of water, is a spring that gushes forth nicely, but whose depth leading to either agricultural terraces or to a diverting pool never exceeded four or five feet. The two major international trade routes of the ancient Levant did not pass through the city or even come close. The Via Maris went along the Mediterranean coast while the King's Highway was further to the east in Transjordan. Rather, only regional roads and local trails led to this highland settlement.

Prior to David's conquest, Yerushalayim was a provincial town. Both archaeological and textual sources confirm that it was a Canaanite city-state often dominated by a non-local elite. For about 300 years (1480-1180 BCE), Jerusalem's rulers were vassals, bound by personal oath and tribute to pharaoh in Egypt. Despite their inferior status, the princes maintained a fair degree of independence and were able to raise their own militias and confront neighboring cities such as Gezer and Shechem.

According to the 14th century BCE Egyptian Amarna tablets,¹ one of the rulers in Jerusalem was an ethnic Hurrian by the name Abdi-Hepa. He appears not to have been one of the more successful Canaanite princes as he not only failed to expand his territory but was actually attacked by locally stationed Egyptian troops. Sometime later, the Yevusi (Jebusites) became dominant in Jerusalem. Scholars are not sure precisely when they arrived, but they are linked archaeologically with agricultural terracing along the eastern slope of the City of David that

¹ See William L. Moran (Editor), *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

dates to the period of the Shoftim² (Iron Age I; 1200-1000 BCE). Like the Hurrians before, the Yevusi may have represented a non-local administrative elite descending from the north.

The Israelites did not initially conquer Yerushalayim:

*The sons of Judah could not drive out the Yevusi
who lived in Yerushalayim ...*

Yehoshua 15:63

וְאֶת-הַיְבוּסִי יִרְשָׁבִי יְרוּשָׁלַם, לֹא-יִקְלוּ בְנֵי-יְהוּדָה
... לְהוֹרִישָׁם
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ טו:סג

In fact, Yerushalayim played only a minor role in the formative events prior to King David's ascension. While the cities of Beit-el, Hevron, Shechem and Beer Sheva are connected with the patriarchal narratives, Yerushalayim is singularly associated with David. It is not exactly known how David conquered the Yevusi city, as the text is somewhat obscure and incomplete (Shmuel Bet 5:8). It seems, however, more like a military *coup d'etat* rather than a bloody conquest. Regardless, David's victory proved to be a watershed moment in the history of the city: the beginning of the deep relationship between the Jewish people and Yerushalayim.

Since David had conquered Yerushalayim with his own troops, it became, according to ancient Near Eastern practice, his personal property. While his initial motivation may have been to eradicate a Yevusi enclave in the midst of his United Kingdom, David soon found himself with a capital city possessing quite a few attractive features: (1) it was built on territory not associated with a particular tribe; (2) it was centrally located (more so than Hevron); (3) it was far enough from Philistine towns not to be attacked suddenly, yet close enough to keep an eye on them; and (4) it was nicely fortified.

David fell in love with his city, even renaming it after himself—*Ir David*. He built a palace and established his family as leaders of the Jewish people. However, David did not just want his family to love Yerushalayim; he wanted all Israel to be connected to his city. This he did by bringing the *Aron*, which had been held at Kiryat-Yearim on the western border of his kingdom, to Yerushalayim (Shmuel Bet 6). Even though he could not build the Beit haMikdash, he purchased its future site.

The city's political and spiritual role increased dramatically under David's son and successor Shlomo. Yerushalayim doubled in size and acquired regional status due to Shlomo's ambitious building program and aggressive expansionist policies. He built a royal acropolis on the crest of Har Zion, which included the Beit haMikdash and a royal palace (Melachim Alef 6-7). With the completion of the Beit haMikdash, the Israelites believed that their days of wandering had come to an end. They had finally established a permanent place where they could serve Hashem independent of external political and cultural pressures.

Then, almost overnight, the city's political and spiritual influence was gravely diminished. All of that Solomonic building activity had extracted a price: the people were exhausted and felt they needed relief. When Shlomo's successor, Rehavam, refused to reduce the forced labor burden (Melachim Alef 12:14), the people rebelled with the end result that the kingdom divided into

² Yigal Shiloh, "Jerusalem: Excavation Results" in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations of the Holy Land*, Vol. 2, edited by Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society, 1993), p. 702.

two: a more prosperous northern kingdom (Israel) with strong ties to Phoenicia, and a more isolated southern kingdom (Judah), lacking in resources. For some 50 years, the kingdoms engaged in hostilities until Israel became embattled up north and began to treat Judah more like a vassal than an enemy.

With the division of the two kingdoms, more than half of the Jewish people instantly lost their connection to Yerushalayim, both politically and spiritually. New administrative capitals were built in the north, first at Shechem, then Tirzah, and finally Shomron. The first King of Israel, Yeravam, provided alternate places of worship at the borders of his new kingdom: Dan in the north and Beit El in the south (Melachim Alef 12:26-33). This seemed to have created no existential crisis for his citizens, since the Beit haMikdash was still in its infancy and their attachment was relatively flexible. It was not until much later, even in Judah, that all public ritual activity became centralized in Yerushalayim (as explained below). The kings of Israel never tried to recreate a single political and religious center that rivaled Yerushalayim. Rather, they spatially divided the political center from the official religious ones. Ultimately, this led to the creation of a very different type of capital city in the north, one that was predominantly administrative in function, and one that ultimately garnered little spiritual attachment.

During the 150 years of the Divided Monarchy (920-721 BCE), the relatively isolated and economically modest kingdom of Judah developed an affinity for its humble capital. Yerushalayim was what urban anthropologists refer to as a regal-ritual city, inhabited by religious functionaries associated with the Beit haMikdash and a not-so-powerful Davidic dynasty. The city relied on the countryside for food, yet its relatively small urban population (less than 10,000) meant that the strain was not overly burdensome. With a strong ideological function, Yerushalayim's social life revolved around the sacred calendar, divine sacrifices and lifecycle events of the royal household. Three times a year, at Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot, the city's population would swell as pilgrims arrived to celebrate the festivals.

In the last quarter of the eighth century BCE, the Jewish people became even more devoted to Yerushalayim. Two events in particular led to this escalating affection: (1) the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel in 721 BCE by the Assyrians and (2) the successful withstanding of the Assyrian siege of Yerushalayim in 701 BCE.

The Assyrian conquest of the Kingdom of Israel meant that all of its major cities were devastated, including its political and religious centers. In addition, thousands of Israelites were deported—the so-called “Ten Lost Tribes”—while thousands of foreigners were subsequently brought to the area in their place (Melachim Bet 17). The Kingdom of Judah saw its population swell as a sizeable number of northerners sought refuge within its borders. Yerushalayim grew tremendously. For the first time, Judahite Jerusalem became a major population center. It expanded to three or four times its former size. New neighborhoods were built, including the *Mishneh* (Second City) on the Western Hill and the *Makhtesh* (the hollow) in the Central Valley.

When the Assyrian king Sargon died in 705, Yerushalayim was at the center of a new coalition of discontented vassals who hoped to throw off the Assyrian yoke. King Hezekiah flexed some of his newfound political muscle and rebelled. He fortified the new neighborhoods and diverted

the waters of the Gichon—both projects reflecting the needs of the city’s burgeoning population (Divrei Hayamim Bet 32). Hezekiah’s bold move was equally motivated by his faith that Hashem would protect His sacred city.

When Yerushalayim withstood the siege against the formidable Assyrian army, the city acquired a mythic sense of itself, and this ethos of impregnability amplified the sanctity and holiness of the city. However, increasing bureaucratic needs and the growing diversity of the city’s population had upended the simple regal-ritual city that had prevailed in earlier days. As the society was moving toward greater centralization of state power and the city was becoming more administrative in nature, a deliberate attempt was made by the leadership to refine the city’s ritual and spiritual identity.

These efforts were manifest in a series of reforms that were enacted first by Hezekiah and later by Yoshiyahu that centralized public ritual in Yerushalayim and purified it of its syncretistic elements. Specifically, Hezekiah enacted measures that no longer tolerated ritual practices involving *bamot* (high places), *matzevot* (stone pillars), *ashera* (wooden posts or tree trunks), or the bronze *nachash* (serpent) that Moshe had made (Melachim Bet 18:4). Yoshiyahu followed a few generations later with even more sweeping reforms that emphasized the primacy of Yerushalayim and the exclusivity of worshiping Hashem. Within Yerushalayim, he purified the sacred precinct by removing pagan objects and male prostitutes, whereas outside of Yerushalayim he eliminated all public ritual whether pagan or Jewish (Melachim Bet 23). A number of archaeological finds attest to these reforms, including a dismantled stone *mizbeach* (altar) at Beer Sheva, a covered up tri-partite temple and *mizbeach* at Arad, and a collection of hundreds of female and zoomorphic figurines in a pit within Yerushalayim itself.

The seventh century BCE was generally one of economic prosperity throughout the Land of Israel, including Judah,³ while the religious reforms strengthened Yerushalayim in particular. The Temple Mount had been expanded and the Beit haMikdash itself served as a repository for the state’s increasing wealth. Wheat and barley yields throughout Judah exceeded local demand and were exported to other regions, while a cottage wine industry prospered in the hills around Yerushalayim. Judah began to slowly expand territorially, particularly to the south where the lands were used to raise sheep and goats for wool, milk and meat.

The notion that Yerushalayim was immune from destruction, seemingly validated during the Assyrian siege, did not go away in the face of a rising Babylonian threat a century later. On the contrary, Judahites—with a few exceptions such as Yirmiyahu—were confident that their increased devotion to Hashem and affection for the Beit haMikdash meant that their city was more protected than ever. It was this false confidence that led to the politically unwise decision by King Zidkiah to forge an alliance with Egypt and rebel against the Babylonians.

At war with Egypt, the Babylonian king Nevuchadnezzar felt compelled to invade Judah, eliminate potential threat, and wreak vengeance. The Babylonians employed a scorched-earth policy that sought to render conquered lands uninhabitable. Unlike the Assyrians who liked to

³ Avi Faust and Ehud Weiss, “Judah, Philistia, and the Mediterranean World: Reconstructing the Economic System of the Seventh Century BCE,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 338 (2005), 71-92.

shuffle conquered peoples to all parts of the empire and rebuild devastated regions, the Babylonians cared only to depopulate peripheral regions, bringing the higher status individuals to Bavel, thereby adding to the magnificence of the core region. They showed no compunction about the complete destruction of Yerushalayim and its sacred Temple. It was standard practice.

For the inhabitants of Judah, the destruction of Yerushalayim and the Beit haMikdash was anything but commonplace. While the physical devastation was not unlike what had happened to Shomron 150 years earlier, the social, psychological and spiritual trauma was unparalleled. Yerushalayim had been the capital of an independent Jewish state for over 400 years; its royal house had served continuously (with one interruption) for over 400 years; its Beit haMikdash had flourished uninterrupted for nearly 400 years. Yerushalayim represented political autonomy and spiritual devotion, inextricably linked since the time of David and reinforced particularly by Hezekiah and Yoshiyahu.

And now all that was gone. The city was no longer inhabitable. The remaining Jews were either exiled to Bavel or left behind to try to rebuild their lives amid the rubble. They mourned the loss of their loved ones, their homes, the Beit haMikdash, their city and their independence. They mourned themselves, that they were not immune from conquest. They mourned that they had once had something very precious and they had not been able to protect it.

And they resolved to never forget.⁴

⁴ As we mourn the destruction of First and Second Temple, it is helpful to frame the great *churban* within a historical context to better appreciate the events that occurred.

Modern Trauma and Ancient Wisdom

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Whether on a personal level or shared by a community, how trauma is dealt with is deeply rooted in the time and culture in which it occurs. Though to this day, and most acutely on Tisha B'Av, we mark the loss of the Beit Hamikdash in our lives, can we imagine the demonstrative response Josephus describes at the destruction of the First Temple where besieged Jews “found strength once more to lament and wail” and during the loss of the second Temple, when “the continual lamentations of those who mourned were even more dreadful?”¹ How do we approach traumatic events in our era, and is there guidance from psychological findings and Jewish practices to aide in facing the challenge?

Perhaps the most critical factor in understanding trauma in our modern age is its universality. Losses and tragedies, even when specific to a community or region, are now shared by the world at large. Technology fosters such rapid transmission of trauma by live-streaming, moment by moment vivid imagery of destruction, that mental health experts and public health officials recognize the potential for its impact on those with even secondary, or distant exposure. For modern Americans, no example is more salient than the destruction of the World Trade Center on 9-11. New York, Washington, D. C. and rural Pennsylvania directly experienced the attacks, but the entire country, and perhaps the world, watched and grieved. The breadth of the trauma, and its shared impact on the psyches of bereaved relatives, first responders, New Yorkers walking dazed past the make-shift photo galleries that sprung up all over the city with posters asking after loved ones, and citizens watching the tragedy unfold on their televisions, engaged extensive public health efforts to determine how best to manage in the face of unmanageable pain.

Psychological research on trauma and mourning dates back to Freud's early writings. His distinction between mourning and melancholia² recognized the universal response to loss, and its normative nature, discouraging pathologizing a healthy response to an inevitable life challenge:

... although mourning involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological condition and refer to it medical treatment. We rely on it being

¹ Cornfield, Gaalya ed., *Josephus, The Jewish War* (1982).

² Freud, S. (1917). “Mourning and Melancholia.” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works, 237-258.

overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful.

Decades later, noted psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's³ highly popular book, *On Death and Dying*, led to prescriptions for sequenced stages of grief, although that was never her intention. More recently, grief and mourning have been subjected to neuroanatomical study with functional imaging research revealing multiple neural structures that mediate grief, including brain structures that address processing of feelings and familiar faces, memory retrieval, visual imagery and regulation of autonomic body functions.⁴

Consideration of responses to trauma has shifted somewhat, from a focus on the difficulties trauma causes, to careful study of those factors that contribute to recovery and build resilience in individuals and groups. This has yielded recommendations remarkably consistent with Jewish practices in mourning and response to trauma and tragedy. We have engaged in these practices in the weeks leading to our commemoration of the tragedy of the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, and we become, in essence, true mourners on Tisha B'Av. Core elements of accepted psychological approaches to grief and trauma are offered below, along with those elements of Jewish rituals and beliefs that, with Torah wisdom, provide for recovery and resilience.

Normalize the response

Physically, emotionally, intellectually, or in combination, mourners and victims of trauma feel out of sorts in a way that is often distressful. In cultures that deny grief and require a stiff upper lip, such feelings are doubly challenging, making the sufferer feel “abnormal.” Judaism evidences, in its approach to the *levaya* and *shiva*, its endorsement of the normalcy and even urgency of expressing sadness. Rabbi Maurice Lamm, in his classic work *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*, reviews the two purposes of the eulogy, *hesped*—or praising of the deceased, and *bechi*—expressing grief and loss.⁵ The Gemara in *Berachot* (6b) expounds that “The merit of eulogy lies in the *dilevai*,” which Rashi explains as “to raise one’s voice in lamentation and anguish, so that the listeners will weep.”⁶ These practices, in encouraging public, communal expressions of grief, communicate to mourners that as uncomfortable as their feelings are, they are completely normal.

Address basic needs, provide safety and material comforts

The Red Cross, and other relief agencies, well know that providing food, shelter, and fulfilling the primary needs of the mourner/victim is at least as important as providing psychological comfort. This is concretized in the mitzvah of neighbors providing the *seudat havra'ah*, the meal of condolence that mourners eat upon return from the burial. While this may follow from the Jerusalem Talmud's caution that “A curse will come upon the neighbors (of a mourner) if they put him in the situation of having to eat his own food”⁷, the *Levush*⁸ suggests it is part of the

³ *On Death and Dying*, 1969.

⁴ Gundel H, O'Connor MF, Littrell L, Fort C, Lane RD. Functional neuroanatomy of grief: an fMRI study. *Am J Psychiatry* 2003;160:1946-53.

⁵ Lamm, 1969, p. 50.

⁶ Talmud Bavli, *Berachot* 6b.

⁷ Talmud Yerushalmi, *Mo'ed Kattan* 3:5.

process of consolation, showing the mourner that people are concerned for him. In seeing to the physical needs of victims and mourners, the bereaved are free to invest psychic energy in the grieving process, and move toward recovery.

Maintain/create social connection and sense of belonging

Tragedy and loss can foster isolation, yet spending time with people who are supportive is critical to recovery.⁹ The week of *shiva* formalizes this process, with the mourner surrounded by visitors who are there to listen and comfort. Rabbi Lamm writes, “The sum effect of the visitation of many friends and relatives ... is the softening of loneliness, the relief of the heavy burden of internalized despair ... ”¹⁰ The custom of all mourners sitting *shiva* together in one home promotes healing, as collective trauma and a unified sense of grief can support adaptive coping.¹¹ Many Jewish communities go well beyond the mitzvah of providing the *seudat havra’ah*, and coordinate all meals for the family for the week of *shiva*. The flow of food, the steady comfort of visitors, and the arrival of the minyan all serve to emphasize that the mourner is connected, is part of a community.

Re-establish routine and control

Trauma and loss upset life’s patterns, and erode one’s sense of predictability and control. After natural or man-made disasters, government agents and mental health experts encourage a return to regular patterns of behavior as soon as possible. Judaism recognizes both the importance of time to express grief openly, and the need to return to ritual and routine. During *shiva*, when the loss is fresh, the mourner is insulated from daily routines of work, shopping and cooking. The bereaved can focus on how his or her life is forever changed. Once the week passes, although grief is far from eliminated, mourners emerge from the protective cocoon of *shiva* and return to their routine. Resuming mundane activities, though certainly challenging, actually promotes a sense of control and is recognized in trauma recovery research as active coping,¹² a process that helps achieve or re-establish a sense of control over stressful situations.

Finding purpose/meaning

There is no doubt that how individuals understand tragic events, and the meaning they assign them, impacts coping and recovery.¹³ While early psychological approaches to coping eschewed spirituality, modern conceptualizations of resilience and recovery put faith at the forefront. The practice of communal recitation of Tehillim in times of trauma, as well as internet discussion boards that encourage private prayers for the ill, underscore the importance of faith in facing

⁸ *Ateret Zahav* 378:1.

⁹ American Psychological Association—Recovering from Disasters. www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx

¹⁰ Lamm, 1969, p.137.

¹¹ Abel, R. M. & Friedman, H. A., 2009. Israeli school and community response to war trauma: A review of selected literature. *School Psychology International*, Volume 30.

¹² Baum, N., 2005 Building resilience: A school based intervention for children exposed to ongoing trauma and stress. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, Volume 10.

¹³ Abel & Friedman, 2009.

challenge. The recognition of God's agency in the world, and the celebration of Divine goodness in our lives, can be extremely curative. But Jewish concepts of purpose and meaning extend beyond *bein adam l'Makom*, to include *bein adam l'chavero*. When, in the aftermath of devastation, communities and individuals come forward to help, and organize to provide for others, they are also contributing to the healing process.

As inhabitants of the modern world, we may struggle to imagine the devastation our ancestors felt as they watched the First Temple burn. Today's traumas, no matter how distant, make their way into our homes and our knowledge, within moments, wanted or not. Traumas that happen worlds away, and are months apart, can be constantly refreshed in our minds. When I began writing this article, I thought of my drive through the neighboring town, a week after Superstorm Sandy, to teach an Azrieli Graduate School class for Long Island educators. Entire contents of homes were on the lawns on almost every block. My "students," who taught in the hardest hit areas, had asked to devote class to a discussion of how to best help traumatized students. A week later, the same class met, many of us without power, many teaching in makeshift buildings and classrooms, and many unable to move back to their homes, but we had, in one week, developed some sense that the worst danger was behind us. That sense eroded on the Friday before this class when a gunman at Sandy Hook Elementary School reminded us that tragedy can strike anywhere. In recent weeks, as we perhaps proceeded to heal and recover, we were riveted to the Boston Marathon finish line, where once again, terror, tragedy and trauma entered our lives. The seemingly constant cycle of tragedies, and the feeling that we share in even geographically distant trauma, contributes to the illusion that the world is more dangerous, more terrible, than ever. Extensive media coverage can certainly escalate our sense of danger and increase traumatization,¹⁴ but connecting us to the trauma and loss of our neighbors, brothers in Israel and around the world, can also engage us in acts of *chesed* and community building. Modern realities may make us party to more trauma, but in allowing us to be party to more compassionate connection to those in need, they may contribute to our resilience. As Jews in the modern era, we do well to harness the wisdom and power of ancient approaches to trauma. Listening to Eichah and *Kinot*, feeling the ancient losses, even in the context of our modern challenges, we will become mourners. We will resonate with the pain of the *payetanim* who authored the haunting verses and remember what we have lost. Modern psychologists would acknowledge the importance of this expression of grief. The loss of the Beit Hamikdash stays with us always, in our liturgy, our rituals, and our thoughts, just as most loss leaves permanent marks. But Jewish tradition makes certain that we recognize that our health and our redemption comes in looking and moving forward. Tisha B'Av is closely followed by the fifteenth of Av, a celebration that parallels the festival of the Lord referenced in *Sefer Shofetim* (21:19), and considered a preface to Elul,¹⁵ a time for review of one's actions. We confront trauma today assisted by these rich traditions and understandings, knowing that we can, should, and must look both backwards and forwards. In this way, we weave into our lives both sadness at what we have lost and hope for what will, with God's help, be forthcoming.

¹⁴ Hravouri, H. Suomalainen, L. Berg, N., Kiviruusu, O., & Marttunen, M., 2011. Effects of media exposure on adolescents traumatized in a school shooting. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Volume 24, 70-77.

¹⁵ See *Bnei Yissachar, Ma'amarei Chodshei Tamuz* and *Av* no. 4.

Rebuilding Ourselves, Rebuilding the World: Lessons from the First Exile

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The Maharal¹ makes a remarkable comment in his observation of the words גלה (exile) and גאל (redemption). He notes that these two words share the letters ג and ל and only differ in the third letter, the א. The Maharal explains that what distinguishes exile from redemption is whether or not there is a oneness among the Jewish people. That oneness is represented by the letter א, which numerically symbolizes the number one. When Klal Yisrael loses its sense of unity, the result is a fracturing and fragmentation of the Klal, transforming our status from *geulah* (גאולה) to *galus* (גלות) and dispersal around the world. We are reduced from being unified as one people in our homeland to being spread across the four corners of the earth.

Ayeka: Where are You?

Perhaps we can glean an alternative idea and insight into the concept of *geulah* and *galus* if we examine more carefully the very first time that humanity suffered expulsion. After Adam and Chava eat from the forbidden tree and before their exile, the Torah describes a perplexing event:

And they heard the voice of Hashem Elokim traveling in the garden toward evening, and Adam and his wife hid from Hashem Elokim among the trees of the garden. And Hashem Elokim called to Adam and said to him, where are you?

Bereishis 3:8-9

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת-קוֹל ה' אֱלֹהִים, מִתְּהִלָּה בַּגֶּן-
לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם; וַיִּתְחַבֵּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ,
מִפְּנֵי ה' אֱלֹהִים, בְּתוֹךְ, עֵץ הַגֵּן. וַיִּקְרָא
ה' אֱלֹהִים, אֶל-הָאָדָם; וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ, אַיֶּכָּה.
בְּרֵאשִׁית ג:ח-ט

“Where are you?” This question, the first question ever recorded in the Torah, needs to be understood. After all, didn’t God know where Adam and Chava were located geographically? This very question was asked in a most interesting set of circumstances to the Ba’al Ha’Tania, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, in a fascinating story that is recounted by R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin.²

¹ *Netzach Yisrael*, Chapter 1.

² *Sippurei Chassidim Al Hatorah* by Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin no. 4.

When R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi was imprisoned by the secret service in St. Petersburg, an officer of the Gendarmes came to interrogate him. The officer saw that the rebbe was pensive and consumed in his thoughts, and understood that he was dealing with a great leader. The officer himself was very intelligent and proficient in the Bible.

The officer said to the rebbe, "I have one question regarding the Torah that I would like to ask you. Will you answer my question?" The rebbe replied, "You may ask the question."

The officer asked, "Please explain to me the meaning of the verse 'And Hashem Elokim called to Adam and said to him, where are you?' Doesn't God know where Adam is?"

The rebbe replied, "Do you believe that the Torah is eternal and applicable in all times, to every generation and to each person?" The officer said, "Yes, I do believe that."

The rebbe said, "The meaning of the verse is that at all times God calls out to man and says 'Where are you? Where are you in the world?' A person has a limited number of days and years, and each day of each year he must do good with God and with people. Therefore, he should ask himself where he is in the world, how many years have passed and what did he do in those years..." The officer was amazed. He clapped and said "Bravo!"

After seeing the intelligence of the rebbe, the officer convinced the czar that the rebbe was a very intelligent and holy man and that in his opinion, the accusations against the rebbe were falsified.

This very notion is captured in the words of Rabbi S. R. Hirsch in his explanation of this *pasuk*:

Ayeka—Where are you? Which spiritual level have you reached?

איִכָּה - היכן אתה? איזו עמדה תפסת? לאיזו דרגה הגעת?

This question, which led up to the first exile, the exile of Adam and Chava from Gan Eden, is really the source of exile itself. When man fails to capitalize on the great potential that God has given him and is unsuccessful in using his talents for His service, then he is exiled from himself, from who he truly can be. This inner exile of self is the cause of his external exile from man's geographic location.

Perhaps this is symbolized by the letter א missing from the word גולה. The א in Hebrew grammar represents the אני, the I, of the person. When a person fails to bring out his true spiritual self and potential, when he misses the אני inside of him, he enters into a self-inflicted exile. This spiritual exile from one's own אני then translates into a real displacement from the land of our spiritual destiny, a land that Hashem has gifted us and tailored to allow us to fulfill our own spiritual calling. This is in contrast to גאולה, which results from living a life of utilizing one's unique talents and abilities in serving the Creator. *Geulah* and our return to Eretz Yisrael is a result of each of us living a life of achievement and realization of our spiritual potential. When we attain גאולה then our missing א is restored as we live a life with connection to who we really are.

Ayekah or Eichah

The Midrash in explaining a verse in Hoshea (6:7) makes the following comment:

Rav Abahu said in the name of Rav Chanina; it is stated (Hoshea chapter 6), "and they were like Adam, they transgressed the covenant," (this means to say that) they are just like Adam HaRishon, just as with

א"ר אבהו בשם ר' חנינא כתיב (הושע ו) והמה כאדם עברו ברית, המה כאדם הראשון, מה

Adam HaRishon, I (Hashem) have brought him into the Garden of Eden and I commanded him (not to eat from the forbidden tree) and he transgressed this order and I judged him and had him evicted and exiled, and I mourned over him with the recital of איכה [... I judged him with exile as it says "and I banished Adam," I mourned over him with the recitation of איכה as it says, "And Hashem Elokim called to Adam and said to him, where are you?"] so too Adam's children, I have brought them into the land of Israel, I have commanded them to perform mitzvos and they have transgressed those mitzvos, I have judged them with eviction and exile, and I have mourned over them with the recitation of איכה. I have judged them with exile as it says (Hoshea chapter 9) "from my home I have exiled them," and I have mourned over them with the recitation of איכה as it says (Eichah chapter 1), "How is it so that she (Zion) sits..."

Bereshis Rabbah Chapter 19 number 9

אדם הראשון הכנסתיו לתוך גן
עדן וצויתיו ועבר על צוויי,
ודנתי אותו בשלוחין ובגרושין,
וקוננתי עליו איכה... ודנתי אותו
בגרושין דכתיב ויגרש את
האדם, קוננתי עליו איכה
שנאמר ויקרא ה' אלהים אל
האדם ויאמר לו איכה, איכה
כתיב, אף בניו הכנסתים לא"י,
וצויתים ועברו על הצווי, דנתי
אותם בשלוחין ובגרושין וקוננתי
עליהם איכה... דנתי אותם
בגרושין שנאמר (הושע ט)
מביתי אגרשם, קוננתי עליהם
איכה שנאמר (איכה א) איכה
ישבה.

בראשית רבה יט:ט

We are taught in the Midrash that when Hashem asked Adam, איכה (*ayekah*), He was really lamenting and mourning over Adam. God was saddened by Adam's sin, pained by his exile. Instead of reading the word *ayekah* as a question of where are you, it is to be read *eichah*, an expression of mourning.

Perhaps, in light of the above interpretation, we can better understand the relationship between these two readings. More than a coincidental spelling between these two words, there is a deep message the Midrash is conveying. For the wayward Jew, the question of where are you is a piercing and painful experience—an experience of realizing one's distance from the Ribbono Shel Olam, recognizing a life of lost potential, and comprehending the failures and disappointments of his life. This is an *eichah* experience. This is Hashem's lamentation, bemoaning the state of man, and anguishing over his downfall. That is where the *ayekah* experience and the *eichah* experience merge, joining in suffering over the lowly state of man.

The Destruction of the Human Beis HaMikdash

The aforementioned Midrash contains another important message highlighting the great potential of the Jew and further underscoring the severity of his failures. The Midrash compares the exile of the entirety of Klal Yisrael to the exile of Adam HaRishon. Adam, one single individual's exile, seems to be likened to the exile of a large nation. I believe the Midrash is teaching that when Hashem looks down at every single Jew, He sees vast capabilities. When man fails to achieve, Hashem mourns that failure just as he mourns the larger scale failure of the entire nation. To God, each Jew is precious; each Jew represents endless opportunities for greatness.

On many a Tisha B'Av I vividly recall how my father, Rabbi Mordechai Willig, would pose a critical question. We read in the Kinnos scores of compositions mourning over the destruction of the two temples, the exile of all of Israel, and the deaths of so many thousands of Jews. Yet among these many Kinnos, we dedicate an entire kinnah to the tragic story that befell the two children of Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol. Why such attention? Why do we devote so much

space in our KinnoS and in our limited mourning capabilities to two children when there is so much more to think about?

My father would quote Rav Yosef D. Soloveichik, who offered a beautiful explanation. He suggested that while we mourn the loss of such great numbers of Jews who were killed, the mourner can be overwhelmed at the staggering figures and can begin to lose his ability to appreciate each loss. Instead of mourning for the deaths of real people, he begins to think of the loss as a number, as a cold historian who records historic events. The stories of these two children help shape and personalize the loss of each person in the hearts and minds of the mourner.

Perhaps one can further expand on this notion and suggest that indeed the loss of two lives is worthy of mourning just as the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. Here the author of the KinnoS is emphasizing the value of each individual. The loss of every person can be seen as the loss of the Beis HaMikdash itself, warranting genuine sorrow and pain.

This idea can be elucidated more clearly based on a comment of the Alshich. The Alshich, in his explanation of the verse (Shemos 25:8) "ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם" (And you shall make me a Mikdash and I will dwell amongst them"), says the following:

It says that I will dwell among them and not (that I will dwell) in it. And the idea is, because I heard those who extract from here that the main residence of the Shechinah is in man himself, and not in the home (Beis HaMikdash), from the fact that it says (I will dwell among) them.

Alshich, Shemos ch. 25

"ושכנתי בתוכם" ולא אמר בתוכו. והוא: כי הנה שמעתי לומדים מכאן כי עיקר השראת שכינה באדם הוא, ולא בבית, מאומרו "בתוכם".

אלשיך, שמות פרק כה

This incredible concept demonstrates the thought we mentioned previously, that each person has such immense significance. Each person is charged with the responsibility to become a living Beis HaMikdash, to use his abilities and talents to bring more Godliness into this world. Therefore, with the loss of every single Jewish life, we mourn and grieve as we do over the loss of the Beis HaMikdash.

Indeed, *galus* according to this understanding reflects the commonality of exile from one's self and from the Beis HaMikdash in a very real way. Both are lacking the \aleph of redemption, both are deficient in fulfilling their common mandate and purpose to be a home to the Shechinah.

We read with respect to the creation of man:

And Hashem Elokim created man from the dust of the earth and He blew in his nostrils a spirit of life, and man became a living soul.

Bereishis 2:7

וַיִּצְרֶה ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת-הָאָדָם, עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה, וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו, נֶשְׁמַת חַיִּים; וַיְהִי הָאָדָם, לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה.
בראשית ב:ז

Targum Yonasan based on Chazal adds the following:

And Hashem Elokim created man with two inclinations and He took earth from the place of the Beis HaMikdash (and used it to create man).

Targum Yonasan, Bereishis 2:7

וברא ה' אלקים ית אדם בתרין יצרין ודבר עפרא מאתר בית מקדשא.
תרגום יונתן, בראשית ב:ז

Why did Hashem choose specifically earth from under the Beis HaMikdash to create man? One explanation may be that Hashem is imparting to us this very message. Man is meant to serve as a portable Beis HaMikdash, serving as a home to the Shechinah wherever he travels. The Beis Hamikdash and Adam were made from the same material, underscoring their shared purpose. When either fails to achieve this objective, when either one disposes of their א, then גאולה turns to גולה, redemption transforms to exile.

The Aleph of God

Shlomo HaMelech teaches in Mishlei:

One who alters the statements of people will cause further fighting; the one who complains will bring about separation between man and his chief.

Mishlei 16:28

איש תהפכות, ישלח מדון;
 ונרנן, מפריד אלוף.
 משלי טז: כח

The Zohar in explicating this verse states:

Who is the chief? This refers to the Holy One Blessed Be He (For He is the Chief of the world).

Zohar, Tzav no. 98

מאן הוא אלוף דא קודשא בריך הוא (דאיהו אלוף
 של עולם).
 זוהר, פרשת צו אות צח

When man sins, he drives a wedge between himself and his Creator, further distancing himself from the Ribbono Shel Olam.

Perhaps, homiletically we can suggest that the *Aluph* mentioned in this verse is connected to the letter Aleph. When one sins, he causes a division in the word גאולה, the sinner removes the Aleph from that word and transforms it into גולה (exile). When humanity eliminates Hashem, the *Alupho Shel Olam* (Chief of the world), from their lives, they bring about an existence absent of God, and are removed from His dwelling.

In a similar vein, we know that the letter Aleph has the numerical value of one:

Who knows one? I know one. One is Hashem, our God in the heavens and the earth.

Passover Haggadah

אחד מי יודע? אחד אני יודע. אחד אלוקינו
 שבשמים ובארץ.
 הגדה של פסח

This famous passage that we recite at the culmination of the Pesach seder has early roots in our tradition.

The Talmud Yerushalmi teaches:

There is no one except for the Holy One Blessed be He, as it says, Hear O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One.

Talmud Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin 10:1

אין אחד אלא הקב"ה כמה דת מר שמע
 ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.
 תלמוד ירושלמי, סנהדרין י:א

The Aleph in גאולה also signifies the Oneness of Hashem. When the Jewish people restore Hashem into their daily routine, when we begin to truly live a God-conscious existence, we then convert our exile into redemption.

We can further develop this idea based on the comments of the Midrash:

And the one who spoke against his creator (referring to the primordial snake) and said that you will not die, he has separated the chief; he has separated the Aleph of the world and was immediately cursed.

Bereishis Rabbah no. 20

ונרגן שריגן דברים על בוראו, ואמר
לא מות תמותון, מפריד אלופ
שהפריד אלופו של עולם ומיד
נתקלל.
בראשית רבה פרשה כ

There is discussion among the commentaries on the Midrash as to who the Alupho Shel Olam is. According to the *Matnos Kehunah* it is a reference to Adam, who was at that time considered the chief of the world. However, the *Eitz Yosef* explains in line with the Zohar:

That he separated the chief etc.: This refers to the Creator blessed is He, the Master of the world. He (Adam) alienated Him from the world, through this sin the Shechinah left the world...

Eitz Yosef, ad loc.

שהפריד אלופ כו'. הוא
הבורא ית' אדונו של עולם. הפרידו
מן העולם שבחטא זה נסתלקה
שכינה מן העולם...
עץ יוסף שם

These two explanations come together in a remarkable way. When man distances himself from Hashem, when he chooses to ignore his spiritual side, he, in effect, has exiled himself from his creator. This in turn generates God's exile from this world. As Hashem withdraws His presence from a world that is unwelcoming to His Shechina, the state of *galus* sets in. When man dispenses with the Aleph that is within his potential, Hashem, in kind, removes His Aleph from the lower world, leaving this world in a state empty of the Shechinah.

When Adam turns to (Flesh and) Blood

The Shelah HaKadosh³ adds another important aspect to this idea. The Shelah explains that the Midrash is referencing the Aleph in Adam's name. When the snake influenced man to sin, he effected a major change to Adam's fundamental character. He successfully eliminated the Aleph from Adam's name leaving him with just the letters דם (blood).

In light of what we have discussed earlier, we can better understand this revolution. What makes man the most unique creation in this world is that he is composed of the physical and the spiritual. He is a composite of blood (דם) and Aleph (א) which represents his spiritual dimension, the part which serves as a home to the One (א) above. Together they unite to become אדם (man).

When man chooses to sin, he drives away the Aleph (א) and is left with blood (דם). He becomes a mere physical being, devoid of his spiritual character. Thus he is referred to as merely flesh and blood, not much different than any other creature.

We read in the very beginning of Divrei HaYamim (Chronicles):

Adam, Shes, Enosh.

Divrei Hayamim I 1:1

אדם שש, אנוש.
דברי הימים א א:א

³ *Maseches Pesachim.*

What is noteworthy is that the letter Aleph (א) in Adam's name is quite large. What is the significance of this enlarged Aleph (א)?

Perhaps there is a profound lesson we are to learn from this. Although we must recognize that man is multidimensional, involving a complex structure and an amalgamation of both the physical and spiritual, we must always remember that there exists a hierarchy. We are required to always position the spiritual dimension of the individual as primary. The enlarged Aleph is to remind man to ensure that his spiritual side, his Aleph (א) should tower over his blood (דם)—that Godliness should radiate from his body to the extent that it outshines his corporal features.

And he (Moshe) said, for the hand is on the chair of God, (there will be) a war of Hashem with Amalek, from generation to generation.

Shemos 17:16

Why is chair spelled kais (כס without the Aleph) and not kisei (כסא), and also (why is) the name of God divided in half? (The answer is that) Hakadosh Baruch Hu swore that His name will be incomplete and His chair will be incomplete until the name of Amalek will be destroyed. And when its name will be obliterated, then Hashem and His chair will be complete.

Rashi, ad loc.

וַיֹּאמֶר, כִּי-יָד עַל-כִּסֵּי-יְהוָה,
מִלְחָמָה לְה', בְּעַמֶּלֶק--מִדֹּר,
דָּר.
שְׁמוֹת יוֹטוּ
...וּמַהוּ כֶסֶס, וְלֹא נֹאמַר כֶּסֶס,
וְאִפְּשָׁם נִחְלַק לְחִצְיוֹ, נִשְׁבַּע
הַקָּב"ה שְׂאִין שְׁמוֹ שְׁלֹם וְאִין
כֶּסֶסוֹ שְׁלֹם עַד שִׁמְחָה שְׁמוֹ
שֶׁל עֲמֶלֶק כּוֹלוֹ, וְכִשִּׁימְחָה שְׁמוֹ
יִהְיֶה הַשֵּׁם שְׁלֹם וְהַכֶּסֶס שְׁלֹם,
רִש"י שֵׁם

The interpretation of Rashi notwithstanding, we still must clarify why the Torah chose to leave the Aleph (א) absent. Why not omit the כ or the ס of כסא (chair)? Perhaps we can better understand this using the ideas presented earlier. As long as Amalek is in this world, God's name is incomplete. That is because Amalek is the antithesis of anything spiritual. It represents the Adam without the Aleph (א), a world without Hashem. Until the point where evil is eradicated from this world, Earth, which serves as the throne of God, will be deficient of His Shechinah. For this reason, it is precisely the Aleph (א) that is omitted from this word.

The sefer *Ahavas Shalom*⁴ adds a beautiful insight to the idea that we have developed. He explains that the Hebrew word *dam* (דם, blood) is the same numerical value (גימטריא) as the word exile (גולה), which equals 44. When man lives a life devoid of Hashem, he is essentially in exile from his real self. He is living a life of mere flesh and blood. Redemption (גאולה) is the point when we reinsert Hashem back into our lives. The numerical value of redemption (גאולה) is equivalent to the word Adam (אדם). When we live a life with the Aleph (א), with Hashem, then we will experience the redemption.

Conclusion

We all mourn for the destruction of our Beis HaMikdash. We all grieve for our current state of exile. Yet let us once again take note and look carefully at the world's very first expulsion. When Adam and Chava were banished from Gan Eden, Hashem placed guardians to ensure that they did not return.

⁴ *Parshas Emor, s.v. Usefartem.*

And He (Hashem) banished man and He placed Cherubim in the east side of Gan Eden, and (He positioned) the revolving flaming sword to guard the entrance to the tree of life.

Bereishis 3:24

וַיִּגְרֶשׁ, אֶת-הָאָדָם; וַיִּשְׁכֵּן מִקְדָּם לְגַן-עֵדֶן אֶת-הַכְּרֻבִים,
וְאֵת לַהֲטֵ הַחֶרֶב הַמְתַּהַפֶּכֶת, לִשְׁמֹר, אֶת-דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ
הַחַיִּים.

בראשית ג:כד

The Ba'al Shem Tov asks a penetrating question. If Hashem really did not want Adam and Chava to return, why did he not build a gigantic wall at the entrance?

His answer is inspiring. Hashem chose the revolving sword because He wanted to allow them a chance to return, a chance to slip through the sword's rotation. If this is true for Adam and Chava, it is also true for us. If man truly desires to end his state of exile (גלות), he has the ability to do so. We are in control of our own destiny. When we begin to allow Hashem re-entry into our homes and into our lives, then Hashem lets us back in to His home and His land. When we restore the Aleph (א) to Adam (אדם), then Hashem restores the Aleph (א) to Geulah (גאולה).

May we be merit the hasty arrival of the *Geulah Sheleimah* (Ultimate Redemption).

Understanding the Mo'ed of Tisha B'av

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God has trampled the mighty in my midst, He has called an assembly/festival (mo'ed) to destroy my young men. God pressed the young daughters of Yehuda like (grapes in) a winepress.

Eicha 1:15

סָלָה כָּל-אֲבִירֵי ה' בְּקִרְבִּי, קָרָא עָלַי
מוֹעֵד לְשֹׁבֵר בַּחֲנֹרִי; גַּת דְּרָף ה'
לְבַתוֹלֵת בַּת-יְהוּדָה.
אִיכָה א:טו

The Navi Yirmiyahu refers to Tisha B'av as a *mo'ed*, which usually connotes a holiday. At first glance, it seems puzzling to call Tisha B'av, the day that personifies all the destructions and devastations of our people, a holiday. How can we possibly refer to it as a holiday? I would like to suggest two different approaches to this question.

First Approach

The term *mo'ed* literally means a meeting, an encounter. Hashem tells Moshe, "I will meet you there," referring to the area in the Mishkan (the Sanctuary), where Hashem will communicate with Moshe on an ongoing basis (Shemos 25:22). The Jewish holidays are called *mo'adim* (Vayikra 23:2) because on these occasions, the Jewish nation encountered the Shechina (the Divine presence) in a most tangible way.

The 31st Kinah is based on the Midrash¹ that focuses on the tragedy of the destruction of the Bais Ha-mikdash, and our being exiled from Jerusalem, by contrasting this to the exodus from Egypt. Understandably, the latter is infused with excitement and optimism, and the former with bitterness and melancholy. But as we sense the sharp contrast, we also become aware of a commonality of both circumstances—that in both circumstances, one is able to see and sense the presence of Hashem, directing, orchestrating and facilitating each event.

The Exodus was accompanied by open miracles. The ten plagues were not only punitive to the Egyptian people, but educational for the slaves, soon to become the Jewish nation. They saw and felt God's caring and love for them, by their being spared the plagues, and many other open miracles, culminating with the splitting of the Red Sea.

The destruction of the Bais Ha-mikdash and the exodus from Jerusalem, in no less a way, had His imprimatur on the events. The Midrash contrasts the conditions of the two exoduses. When

¹ *Yalkut Shimoni*, Eicha 1026.

we left Egypt, and spent 40 years in the desert, Moshe summarizes their miraculous survival by "you did not lack a thing (Devarim 2:7)." It is interesting to note Rav Yosef Salant's comments² that this might very well be the reason for the law on Sukkos that a *mitzta'er*—one who is uncomfortable—is exempt from the sukkah, as the mitzvah of sukkah is to help us relive the comforts we miraculously experienced in the desert. When we left Yerushalyim, Yirmiyahu depicts the exact opposite: "the young children ask for bread, and no one gives it to them (Megilas Eichah 4:4)." Yet the faith of our people was not compromised. They did not ask, "where is God?" The extreme circumstances, the overflowing kindness and benevolence on the one hand, and the extreme judgments of tribulations on the other, brought them to "*Odecha ki anisanai*, I thank you for Your persecuting me (Tehillim 118:21)," for reminding me that the close bond is still there.

There is a famous teaching of the Kotzker Rebbe³ who tries to understand the punishment for the serpent who was told that he would eat dust his entire life (Bereishis 3:14). Why was this considered a punishment if he was allotted a life supply of sustenance and nourishment? The Kotzker Rebbe answers that God was closing the door on the serpent, saying: We no longer have a relationship. You have your sustenance and you no longer need me. When God punished His people in the extreme, He was showing his involvement with us, though it might be characterized as "*meitzitz min ha-charakim*, peering through the lattices,"⁴ without being seen. He is there, and our faith in Him was not diminished one iota, as we knew with absolute surety that it emanated from Hashem.

The daily declaration of our pledge of allegiance, the Shema Yisroel, bolsters this faith. The name Hashem is understood to mean the characteristic of kindness and mercy. The name Elokim denotes judgment and retribution. The concluding Hashem Echod, Hashem is one, is our commitment of faith that it all emanates from One source, whether through kindness and mercy or through judgment and retribution. At times, He manifests Himself as Avinu, our loving father, and at times as Malkaynu, our King, but our faith in Him remains steadfast.

The Talmud⁵ tells a story of Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai that took place shortly after the *churban* (the destruction of the Mikdash and Yerushalayim). Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai and his students were leaving the holy city, and he noticed a woman gathering pieces of barley from within the dung of the donkeys of Arabs. Upon seeing the rabbi, she asked for assistance, that he give her charity and food. The rabbi asked her name and she told him that she was the daughter of Nakdimon, the son of Gurion, one of the wealthiest Jews in all Israel. Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai's immediate response after crying, upon assessing the situation, was to say "*ashreichem Yisroel*," how fortunate is the Jewish nation, "when they fulfill God's will, no nation may dominate them, and when they are derelict in their keeping of His Torah, they are subservient to a low nation, and moreover worse, to the animals of a lowly nation."

² *Be'er Yosef*, Vol.2 page 58.

³ Cited in *Emes M'Kotzk Titzmach*, pg. 42.

⁴ Shir HaShirim 2:9. In contrast to *mashgiach min hacholonos*, observing through the windows, where both parties can see each other and are aware of their presence, when He is peering through the lattices, He is looking, but we can't see Him.

⁵ *Kesuvos* 66b.

Rav Chaim Friedlander⁶ notes that the extreme contrast in the life of this woman personifies the fate of the Jewish nation. There is no average way of life, or norm for the Jewish nation. Either we are on top of the world, or we are at the other extreme. In both situations, leaving Egypt and Jerusalem we sensed His presence.

Moreover, Chazal are teaching that just as during the Exodus, the written Torah reiterates time and again⁷ that the people believed in Hashem, they knew that He was determining their destiny; similarly, at the time of the *churban*, destruction, the faith of the downtrodden people is highlighted.

The Talmud⁸ relates that 400 Jewish youths were being transported by boats for immoral purposes after the *churban*. They had one question, namely, if they jumped overboard, thereby taking their own lives, would they still merit Olam Habbah, their share in the world to come? Hashem illuminated their eyes, as their leader cited for them the verse, "I will bring you back from the depths of the sea (Tehillim 68:23)," and they all demonstrated their belief and died *al kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying His name. As the Jewish nation sang the song of deliverance to Hashem upon crossing the Red Sea, they sang songs of allegiance, and upon drowning themselves at sea, they reaffirmed their faith. This contrast is a living fulfillment of "Of kindness and justice do I sing (Tehillim 101:1)," which the Talmud⁹ interprets to mean that if I am dealt kindness, I will sing, and if I am dealt punishment, then too I will sing. The Jew responds with song and appreciation of His intimate involvement, being the beneficiary of His *chesed*—endless kindness, and sings with the same enthusiasm of His involvement in receiving His stern judgments and punishments. In both situations, the *mo'ed* encounter is tangible.

During the period of the Bais Ha-mikdash, we experienced *ha'oras panim*, the light of His countenance, the fulfillment of "in the light of the King's countenance is life (Mishlei 16:15)," and at the time of the *churban*, they sensed "Jerusalem sinned greatly, she has therefore become a wanderer (Megilas Eicha 1:8)." As the Exodus from Egypt elevated them to experience the closeness, the special relationship between man and His Maker, the identical feelings of closeness were experienced when they forsook their Maker, and felt *hester panim*, the hiding of His countenance.

Similarly, the Midrash¹⁰ recalls the story of the mother (Chana) and her seven sons, all of whom refused to bow to idolatry, and offered their lives instead. Tragedy had not divested them of their faith and belief in Hashem. Hence, Tisha B'av is a *mo'ed* when we reflect upon the personal close relationship of Am-Yisroel and Hashem, as experienced through the long bitter *galus* (exile).

The Talmud¹¹ records that an apostate turned his back on Rabbe Yehoshua, intimating that Hashem has forsaken the Jewish nation after the *churban*. Rabbe Yehoshua responded by raising his hand ready to strike. He thereby demonstrated that by chastising and punishing, God still

⁶ *Sifsei Chaim, Mo'adim* vol.3 pg. 248.

⁷ Shemos 4:31 and 14:31.

⁸ *Gittin* 57b.

⁹ *Berachos* 60b.

¹⁰ *Eicha Rabbah* 1:50.

¹¹ *Chagiga* 5b.

shows His fatherly-heavenly connection with His people. This is the message of the *mo'ed* of Tisha B'av—to bolster our belief in Hashem.

Second Approach

There is a second approach to understanding the term *mo'ed* in reference to Tisha B'av. On the three pilgrim festivals, we not only came to His Temple *liros-v'leira'os*, to see and be seen. We were the recipients of Divine blessings at that time. First, upon coming to the Bais Ha-mikdash, the kohanim were busy taking the pilgrims on tours, showing how Hashem loves and has a special rapport with B'nei Yisrael.¹² This was demonstrated by the *keruvim* embracing each other, the freshness of the 12 loaves of the show-breads, and the *Ner Ha-maaravi*—the middle branch of the Menorah that constantly burned beyond the other six lights, all portraying the closeness of Hashem with His people.

In addition, we received on Pesach an outpouring of *cheirus* (freedom). We not only remembered the historical past, but were endowed with a special blessing—*shefah* (Divine flow) characteristic of *cheirus*, enabling the individual to have a healthier, more wholesome optimistic outlook on life.

On Shavuot, we not only recalled the Revelation, we relived it. Every Amidah is concluded with the supplication that the Temple should be rebuilt speedily in our days, that we should be granted a share in the Torah. What is the connection between the rebuilding of the Temple and receiving a share in the Torah? It was through the Bais Ha-mikdash that we received greater understanding and wisdom to appreciate the Torah.

On Sukkos as well, the biblical mitzvah of taking the four species during the entire week of Sukkos in the Mikdash and Yerushalayim was an experience of connecting with Hashem, as the verse states, "and you shall rejoice before Hashem, your God, for a seven-day period (Vayikra 23:40)." There was a tangible state of awareness of being in the presence of Hashem.

To further illustrate the knowledge that the Bais Ha-mikdash imparted, Rav Eliyahu Lapian¹³ cites from the *Toras Ha-Olah* of the Ramah the following incredible (yet historically anachronistic) exchange. After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Bais Ha-mikdash, the philosopher Plato entered the ruins and found the prophet Yirmiyahu sitting and crying bitter tears over the loss and destruction of the Holy Temple. The philosopher asked the prophet why was he crying over sticks and stones. Yirmiyahu responded, "as a philosopher you probably have some unresolved issues and perplexing ideas; ask me any of your uncertainties." Plato asked and Yirmiyahu answered each question with such absolute clarity, that Plato was not sure if he was communicating with a mortal or an angel. Upon noting Plato's astonishment, the prophet said, "all my wisdom comes from these sticks and stones."

These sticks and stones, which were the source of incredible wisdom, are also the focus of the following Midrash. The Midrash¹⁴ asks: How could Asaph begin the 79th Psalm which depicts

¹² *Chagiga* 26b.

¹³ *Chochma U'musar* pg. 293.

¹⁴ *Eicha Rabbah* 4:14.

"the nations have entered into Your inheritance, they have defiled the sanctuary of Your Holiness, they have turned Jerusalem into heaps of rubble," with Mizmor L'Asaph, literally a song by Asaph? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate and understandable to write a "Lamentation by Asaph?" The Midrash answers that Asaph rejoiced in the fact that Hashem, in His anger, could have destroyed His unfaithful nation. Instead, He poured and directed His wrath and anger on the physical structure, on the sticks and stones, and spared the nation.

At first glance, our practice of mourning on Tisha B'av is baffling and counter-intuitive. On the one hand, it is most understandable, the sequence and gradual intensification of mourning, starting with Shiva-Asar-B'Tammuz, three weeks of no haircuts and no weddings, the nine days beginning with Rosh Chodesh, the *shavua shechal bo*, the days immediately prior to Tisha B'av, erev Tisha B'av, the day preceding the fast, and finally the night and morning of Tisha B'av, sitting low on the ground, not yet donning the tefillin. However, when we reach *chatzos*, midday, our practice becomes perplexing. At *chatzos*, the Romans set the Bais Ha-Mikdash ablaze. One would have expected that this would be the most grievous intense time of mourning. Yet at this time, we rise off the ground and sit regularly after *chatzos*. The Vilna Gaon¹⁵ explains that this is actually a time of consolation, of appeasement for the Jewish nation, as at this time He vented His anger towards the physical structure and spared the nation. Hashem had a choice, either destroy the people or the Sanctuary. He chose the latter, and for this Asaph and the Jewish people find optimism on Tisha B'av.

Why did Hashem have to make a choice between the nation and the Mikdash?¹⁶ We see from the orderly presentation of the Torah, that a prerequisite for the building of a Mishkan, to merit the Divine Presence, was the acceptance of Torah. This acceptance of the Torah is found in *Parashas Yisro*. Yet at the end of *Parashas Mishpatim*, immediately prior to the *parshiyos* discussing the construction of the Mishkan, the Torah¹⁷ returns to discuss the preparations for the Revelation, and provides us with the declaration of the people of *na'aseh v'nishma*, we will do and we will listen, (i.e. study). The prerequisite for Shechinah was our commitment to do, to live and observe Torah.

Thus, it is understandable that which Rav Chanina ben Dosa taught,¹⁸ "anyone whose good deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom will endure, but anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, his wisdom will not endure." In the above text, the author does not bring any proof or substantiation for his teaching. In *Avos d'Rav Noson*,¹⁹ the author cites *na'aseh v'nishma* as the basis for his teaching. Rabbeinu Yonah, in his commentary on this Mishnah, adds that even the genuine resolve and commitment to perform the mitzvos and all their components and nuances is graciously looked upon On High as if the individual has already performed these meritorious acts.

¹⁵ *Bi'ur Ha-Gra, Orach Chaim 555:2.*

¹⁶ This idea is based on the writings of R. Shimshon Pinkus, *Galus U'nechama* pp. 53-63.

¹⁷ See Rashi 24:1.

¹⁸ *Avos 3:12.*

¹⁹ *Avos d'Rav Noson 22:1.*

Case in point: the Bais Ha-mikdash was the source of incredible wisdom. Unfortunately, at the time of the *churban*, the Jewish nation was lacking in their performance of Torah.²⁰ Therefore, this great flow of wisdom, energy and sanctity did not have proper receptacles, individuals to receive this Divine gift. Hashem could either strike down the recipients for their unworthiness, or shut down the supernatural flow. Fortunately for us He chose the latter.

Rav Shimshon Pinkus suggests²¹ a novel understanding of the term *mo'ed* in reference to Tisha B'av. Unlike all other festivals in which man approaches the Shechinah and benefits from basking in His shadow, on Tisha B'av, God approaches man and scrutinizes and judges whether man is ready for the restoration of the Shechinah, the Divine flow of wisdom. Is he still in a state of—“his wisdom exceeds his actions,” or perhaps and hopefully, his actions, demeanor and *weltanschauung*, reflect his changed status to that of—“one whose actions exceed his wisdom.” The *mo'ed* of Tisha B'av is thus understood in a most personal way, of *Hashem* coming to visit *us*.

The Rambam²² gives us an ideal day in the life of the average Jew. He is engaged in business for three hours of the day, and the other nine hours are devoted to the spiritual pursuits of Torah study and the performance of good deeds. Granted, our lifestyle is so dramatically different, but we must utilize the teachings of the aforementioned Rabbeinu Yonah, that our true resolve and desire should be to spend much more time in the *bais ha-midrash* (study hall), to be involved in family and *chesed* in a greater fashion, so that our true nature and identity warrants His gift of enriched *chochmah*.

Tisha B'Av is a *mo'ed*, both in terms of understanding our close connection with God and in terms of God coming to us to scrutinize our actions. We live in a time of exceptional *chochmah*. In the Torah world, there has been a great proliferation of seforim and articles, relating to all areas of Jewish life, philosophy and observance. In the secular world, we have witnessed and participated in a burst of technological advancements: medical advancements, space explorations and computer technology, all of which have added greatly to the enriched standard of living and quality of life that we enjoy. On Tisha B'Av, we must ask ourselves two sobering questions. First, do we recognize the hand of God in our successes and challenges? Are we able to see that God is watching over us and orchestrating these events? Do we have the same level of trust in God as those who personally experienced the *churban*? Second, has this age of *chochmah* produced greater, more refined people? When God scrutinizes us on Tisha B'Av to see if “our wisdom exceeds our actions,” what will He find? The *mo'ed* of Tisha B'Av is an opportunity to ask these questions and hopefully come up with answers that will help us merit the rebuilding of the Bais Ha-mikdash.

²⁰ *Yuma* 9b.

²¹ See note 16.

²² *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:12.

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