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Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman

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WHAT DIRECTION DO YOU FACE?

A few years ago, a group of archeologists in Israel made a startling discovery. They found a small amphitheater, just under Wilson's Arch, built by the Romans in the generation following the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. This archeological discovery was particularly significant as it provided insight into Roman culture following their siege on our Holy Temple.

I was invited to visit this newly discovered amphitheater this past Chanukah just as it was opened to the public. The theatre is located underneath the men's prayer section of the Kotel and walking through the excavations underground feels like walking back in time to Jerusalem immediately after the destruction of the Temple. The archeologist who described the findings to me and my family noted that the chairs of the amphitheater faced away from the Beit HaMikdash. For centuries the top of the Temple Mount was seen as the central point of the city to which everyone faced, but after the destruction, the Romans not only destroyed the building they also tried to shift the fundamental direction of our focus, away from the Temple Mount.

But while they succeeded in knocking down the Temple's walls, they never succeeded in removing it from our hearts.

One of my illustrious predecessors, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, once distinguished between two halakhic responses to the absence of the Temple. The first are the series of laws implemented *zecher le-churban*, to remember the destruction. Especially at times of great joy, we take active measures to heighten our cognition that without the Temple, we are not complete. When we build our houses, we leave a part unfinished and when we dance at our weddings, we remember Jerusalem. But there are another series of laws not to remember the destruction but *zecher le-Mikdash*, to remember our Holy Temple. Throughout Sukkot, we make a blessing on the lulav and esrog and on Hoshanah Rabbah we take the aravot to remember the way the holiday was observed in the Temple. These laws are not about mourning a past, but creating a longing for a future.

Taken together, they ensured that the Jewish people remained conscious of the fact that throughout their travels at all different time periods and places

in the world, our center of gravity and central focus was and always will be towards Jerusalem.

These stones are not the remnants of Israel but the stones on which the future of Israel is being built.

And today we are blessed to have a State of Israel and once again see Jerusalem being built under Jewish sovereignty.

As I was standing under the Kotel at the excavation site of the amphitheater where the Romans thought that they can succeed in turning our focus away from Jerusalem, I was reminded how far we have come as a people. To the Romans, when they left the last retaining wall of the Temple Mount standing, they thought that these stones represented the remainders of an Israel that will soon be forgotten. But we have shown that these stones are not the remnants of Israel but the stones on which the future of Israel is being built.

אבן מאסו הבונים היתה לראש פינה.
The stones that were once rejects, are now the cornerstones of our people.
Tehillim 118:22

May we continue our work to move history forward and bring the final redemption, so that we can realize together the continuation of this chapter:

זה היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה בו.
This is the day that the Lord has made, let us exult and rejoice on it.
Tehillim 118:24

Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Dr. Berman at https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-dr-ari-berman/

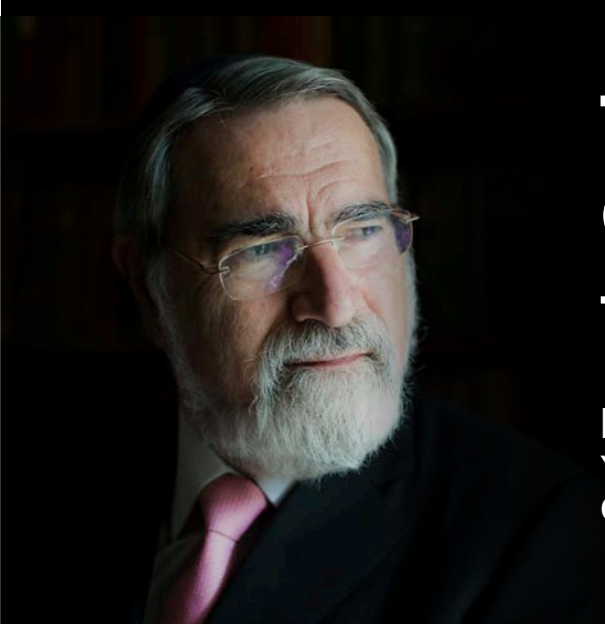

Table Talk: Quotes and Questions for Family Discussions

Prepared by Rabbi Marc Eichenbaum
Yeshiva University's Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership

Please enjoy this collection of sources, quotes, and discussion questions to enhance your Tisha B'Av experience. They are ideally meant to inspire family and other group discussion.

Finding Joy within Destruction

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. Take wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city into which I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray to the Lord for it: for in its peace shall you have peace.

Yirmiyahu 29:4-7

- **What type of message was Yirmiyahu imparting to the exile in Babylon?**
- **How is the tone of this message different from the one imparted in Eikha?**
- **When was the last time you were able to find joy in the midst of suffering?**

Personalizing Tisha B'Av

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: This was the custom of Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Ilai. On the eve of the Ninth of Av, near the evening, they would bring him stale bread with salt, and he would sit between the oven and the stove and eat. He drank a flask with it, and in doing so he would resemble one whose deceased relative is laid out unburied before him.

Ta'anit 30a-30b

- **How did Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Illai, prepare for Tisha B'Av?**
- **Why do you think he sat between the oven and the stove? What do they symbolize?**
- **How can you personalize your Tisha B'Av experience to make it more meaningful?**

The Charismatization of Routine

There was always halakha. But after the Temple's destruction, it became the vehicle through which the priestly task was spread throughout the people. Halakha invested, and invests, every detail of daily life with the charisma of holiness. No longer did anyone need a special uniform to single them out as priests or holy people, because the Jewish people as a whole had become, individually and collectively, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). If the kohen represented the routinization of charisma, Judaism — through its halakhic sanctification of everyday life — eventually became the charismatization of routine.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Covenant & Conversation: Exodus (Maggid Books, 2010): 248

- **According to Rabbi Sacks, how did Halakha's role shift after the destruction of the Temple?**
- **What areas of life are most intensely governed by Halakha? Why do you think these areas need the most halakhic governance?**
- **How has Halakha invested the details of your life with more meaning?**

Understanding Eikha

Eikha's seemingly inconsistent and rapidly changing attitudes toward God may be explained by the fact that emotions lie at its core. Is God just or not? An intellectual consideration of the matter approaches the question systemically, offering coherent, logical arguments. However, when humans address the same events through an emotional lens, contradictions abound. God is both just and unjust. Humans are simultaneously baffled, abashed, angered, and comforted by God. The ebb and flow of human emotions and the way they shift and converge, collide and contradict, can account for the rapid swing between different perspectives in Eikha. This represents the emotional condition of humans, offering a realistic and multifaceted portrait of how humans cope with God's role in their tragedy.

Dr. Yael Ziegler, Lamentations: Faith in a Turbulent World, (Maggid Books, 2021): 35-36

- **How does Dr. Ziegler understand the seeming incoherence of the structure of Eikha?**
- **Can you think of other texts of Tanakh that may be explained in a similar manner?**
- **How do you cope with contradictory emotions?**

Mourning the Unknown

Thus, the loss of this ultimate House, Hurban HaBayit, can only be understood through the loss of its microcosm, our own homes. Imagine a fire sweeping through every room of your house, taking with it in its destructive path the family portraits, the dinner table that served up so many intimate memories, the stores of souvenirs, objects and furniture that make up a life. In our sentimental moments, each nook and corner holds reservoirs of meaning. Who am I if I no longer have a home? Often when people are moving and look at the contents of their homes boxed up in cartons, their houses stripped of personal identifying markers, they experience the existential dizziness of dislocation. Imagine now that we undergo this as an entire people. We don't know who we are when our center is removed.

Dr. Erica Brown, In the Narrow Places, (Maggid Books and OU Press, 2011):18

- **How does the destruction of one's home rupture their sense of identity?**
- **Before the Temple was built we had temporary Tabernacles. How may a Tabernacle represent our relationship with God differently than the way a Temple does?**
- **Do you have any memories associated with your home that may help you personalize the destruction of the Temple?**

The Power of Hope

The Jews gave to the world this idea of time as a narrative of hope, which meant that what is lost can be regained, what is destroyed can be rebuilt, and what disappears may one day return. Our Prophets were able to see beyond the horizon of history, so that where everyone else saw doom, they also saw the hope that lay just over that horizon, and they understood that there was a route from here to there. That really is a remarkable vision. We are the people who gave the concept of hope to the world. We kept faith, we never gave up, and we honestly observed for 26 centuries without a single pause, the line in Tehillim 137, "I will never forget you, O Jerusalem". And because we never gave up hope, we finally came back to Jerusalem. Hope rebuilds the ruins of Jerusalem. The Jewish people kept hope alive, and hope kept the Jewish people alive.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Ceremony & Celebration Family Edition: The Three Weeks & Tisha B'Av 5781

- **According to Rabbi Sacks, how did Jews redefine the concept of time?**
- **How do you think the rituals of Tisha B'Av help us maintain hope for the future?**
- **How can you work on having more hope in your life?**

Exiled, but not Alienated

True and devoted friends never forget each other — even if anger and offense have caused them to separate from one another. Of genuine friends it may never be said that "out of sight, out of mind." Where there was once deep and profound love between husband and wife, some spark of it will always remain no matter how sorely their marriage has been tried. Absence, indeed, may make the heart grow fonder and the old love may well be reawakened… Such indeed is the hester panim that separates us from our Father in heaven. We are exiled from Him — but not alienated. We are so far — yet so close. We are separated -- but not divorced. God's face is hidden — but His heart is awake.

Rabbi Norman Lamm, The Veil of God, 1965

The word "bat" — daughter — appears in the megillah more than 20 times, most often as bat Zion, bat Yerushalayim or bat ami (the daughter of My nation). The message is clear: Knesset Yisrael is the daughter of G-d, and the father-daughter relationship is a metaphor that describes the relationship between G-d and His nation. This word bat is the most powerful way to describe our relationship: the parent-child contract is permanent. It is impossible to break up, impossible

to divorce, impossible to quit. There is no get or contract to end the relationship. It lasts forever.

Sivan Rahav Meir, "Framing the Destruction," Torah To-Go, Tisha B'Av 5780

- **To which types of relationships do these thinkers compare our relationship with God?**
- **What other words appear frequently in Eikha? How may those words help us better understand the nature of Tisha B'Av?**
- **Is there anyone in your life with whom you would like to reunite?**

The Temple Within our Souls

Our yearnings to be connected to the Temple — to God's House on the mountain summit, to the service of the kohanim, the song of the Levites, and the ma'amad (deputation) of the Israelites, to share all of the nation's soul-ties to its holy abode — these yearnings awaken the "beauty of the universe" in the hearts of Israel each day. They establish an elevated Temple inside the soul of each individual, as we begin the day by reciting the order of offerings and incense in our morning prayers.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, Shemonah Kevatzim vol. I, sec. 606

- **How does Rav Kook view the importance of yearning for the Temple?**
- **What Biblical verse implies that our actions towards the building of a sanctuary will cause God's presence to dwell within us?**
- **How may this relate to Chazal's (Ta'anit 30b) statement, "Whoever mourns for Jerusalem merits to see it in its joy?"**

Relating to Churban and Galut

Rabbi Mordechai Becher

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THE CHURBAN AND BAD MIRACLES

חֵטְא חָטְאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל־כֵּן לְנִידָה הָיָתָה כָּל־מְכַבְּדֶיהָ הִזִּילוּהָ כִּי־רָאוּ עֶרְוָתָהּ גַּם־הִיא נֶאֱנָחָה וַתָּשָׁב אָחוֹר: (איכה א:ח)

Jerusalem grievously sinned; therefore, she has become loathsome; all who once respected her disparage her, for they have seen her nakedness. She herself sighs and turns away.

The Gemara explains the phrase "*they have seen her nakedness*" as a reference to an incident during the destruction of the Second Beit Hamikdash:

אמר ריש לקיש בשעה שנכנסו גוים להיכל ראו כרובים המעורין זה בזה הוציאון לשוק ואמרו ישראל הללו שברכתן ברכה וקללתן קללה יעסקו בדברים הללו מיד הזילום שנאמר כל מכבדיה הזילוה כי ראו ערותה: (יומא נד:)

Reish Lakish said: When gentiles entered the Sanctuary, they saw the keruvim, cherubs [male and female] entwined with each other. They took them out to the market, and said: These Jews, whose blessing is a blessing and whose curse is a curse should they be occupied with such matters? They immediately disparaged them, as it is stated: "all who once respected her disparage her, for they have seen her nakedness."

The immediate problem with this story is that the relationship of the *keruvim* to each other reflected the relationship between the Jewish people and God. The Gemara tells us that when we were not fulfilling the will of God the *keruvim* turned away from each other, and when we were fulfilling God's will they turned toward each other (*Bava Batra* 99a).

The Ritva (Yoma ad loc.) raises this question:

בשעה שנכנסו גוים להיכל מצאו כרובין מעורין זה בזה. הקש׳ הרב בן מאוש ז״ל דהא בב״ב אמרינן שלא היו פניהם איש אל אחיו אלא כשהיו עושין רצונו של מקום ... והנכון כמו שפי׳ הרא״ם ז״ל דהני נמי בנס היו מעורין עכשיו אלא שנעשה נס לרעה כדי לגלות ערותן.

When the pagans entered the Heichal they found the keruvim entwined in each other. The Ri Migash asked that according to Bava Batra 99a, which states that the keruvim only faced each other when the Jews were fulfilling Hashem's will [how could it be that at the time of the destruction and punishment for Israel's sins they were embracing each other?] ... the correct answer appears to be that the keruvim were entwined miraculously, however in this case it was a miracle for the bad, in order to expose the shame of the Jews…

The Ritva uses the unique phrase *nes lera'ah* "a miracle for bad" to describe this debasement of the Jewish people. Sometimes we see something terrible and tragic and still recognize it as an act of Hashem, a miracle. A miracle is something that clearly indicates Divine involvement in the world, and at times that involvement can be seen in a negative occurrence. Antisemitism is an example of this "miracle for bad." Antisemitism is unfortunately a phenomenon that has plagued us throughout history and continues to this day. There is a hatred for the State of Israel that is inexplicable in its intensity, universality and irrationality. It is a hatred that is found among Muslims, Christians, right-wing fascists and left-wing socialists.

This was pointed out by Rav Soloveitchik decades ago: *Communist Russia together with the*

Vatican, Nehru, the student of Gandhi, together with the devoutly Catholic Franco, the British Foreign Office with Chiang Kai-shek, have all joined in the attempt to isolate Israel and are being assisted by [Israel's other] enemies in other lands. This conspiracy began specifically after the establishment of the State, at a time when many of Israel's leaders thought that the Jewish problem had been solved, that Jewish isolation had been eradicated and normality had been introduced into our existence. The assumption that the State of Israel has weakened antisemitism is erroneous. On the contrary, antisemitism has grown stronger and employs false charges against the State [of Israel] in the war against us all.
***Kol Dodi Dofek,* translated by David Z. Gordon, 2006. Ch. 11**

I believe that one explanation for this extraordinary "miracle for bad" is that all these groups may have consciously or unconsciously sensed that the return of Jews to their land, the establishment of an independent Jewish state and the success of the state, are indications of the coming redemption. They are afraid, perhaps not even knowing why, as the Gemara (*Megilah* 3a) states, "Even though they did not see the vision, their souls saw it, (*mazlayhu chazu*) and therefore they sensed that there was something fearful..."

The Jewish national revival in Israel is as though a fossil, to borrow Arnold Toynbee's phrase, has come back to life. Frightening indeed for those who have based their ideology on the assumption that the Jews were rejected by God because they rejected a "messiah." Threatening for those who predicate their faith on the belief that the Jews and the Torah have been superseded by the later "revelation" of the seal of all prophets. Terrifying for those who believe that there is no God, no Divine Providence and no Chosen People. The same events that cause fear and hatred on the part of others, cause joy and anticipation for us. We, like Rabbi Akivah (*Makot* 24a-b), although witnesses to destruction and hatred, hear in the hatred a "bad miracle" — bad, yes, but a miracle, nonetheless.

Others see Israel and its success and perceive the eternal nature of the Jewish people as a threat to their beliefs and their convictions. We understand these same phenomena as testimony to the imminent redemption. If you see dinosaur footprints in stones in the Jerusalem Forest near Bait Zayit, there is nothing to be afraid of — they have been extinct for eons and only exist as fossils. If, however, you are on the beach in Costa Rica and see fresh velociraptor footprints in the sand — be afraid, very afraid. While others see footprints of an extinct fossil that has come to life, we see the footsteps of the Mashiach, *ikveta d'Meshicha*.

Israel's success in agriculture is obvious as we walk through a Costco in New Jersey and see Israeli fruits and vegetables on display. "There is no greater indication of the redemption than this, 'And you, mountains of Israel, shall bring forth your branches and bear your fruits for My people Israel'" [Ezekiel 36]. Rashi — When the Land of Israel gives its fruits in abundance, then the redemption is approaching (*Sanhedrin* 98a). This is something that always inspires me, but I can imagine it as something that is threatening and sinister to others.

We can identify with the reaction of Rav Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, the Netziv, in 1882, to receiving one of the first bottles of wine produced by the Carmel (East) Wine Company in Rishon LeZion. He put on his Shabbat clothing to greet the wine and cried with joy when he held the bottle. We can also understand, although clearly not identify with, someone of another faith who saw that as a contradiction to his deeply held belief in the extinction or obsolescence of the Jews.

Abba Eban spoke at Yeshiva University in 1955 and addressed the idea of the Jews as fossils with his signature eloquence:
Now, the doctrine of the fossil is the very core of the Toynbee heresy. If Israel was a fossil centuries ago, then its survival is certainly an archaism and its restoration is a grotesque paradox. On the other hand, if the concept of Judaism as something petrified and embalmed cannot be sustained, then it is difficult to challenge the right of a sentient living spirit to seek survival and restoration. Prof. Toynbee fails, indeed declines, to substantiate the fossil theory, despite the fact that it is the absolute premise and starting point of all his subsequent judgments. ***But the fossil, not having read Dr. Toynbee's eight volumes, is unaware of its own petrification****. It clings to its sense of mission, and even strives for national restoration.*

We are indeed still in exile and are therefore called "prisoners." But the prophet Zechariah (9:12) describes us as "prisoners of hope" — "*Return to the fortress, you prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.*" We are "unaware of our own petrification" and therefore filled with hope and with a will to live, to build and to restore our nation to its former glory.

Relating to Churban and Galut

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THE REDEMPTIVE VALUE OF GALUT

One difference between *Churban Bayit Rishon* and *Churban Bayit Sheini* is the traditional Jewish sources we have that talk about them. Whereas *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* provide information about *Churban Bayit Rishon*, our principal Jewish source (aside from secular and archaeological sources) for most information on *Churban Bayit Sheini* is rabbinic literature. Although because of its greater proximity to our own time, *Churban Bayit Sheini* is historically better recorded and possibly easier for us to relate to, there is a fundamental difference in the nature of these sources: our information about the second *churban* derives from materials written by humans, but our knowledge about the first *churban* has the additional gravitas in the case of *Nevi'im* of emanating from G-d and in the case of *Ketuvim* of emanating from divinely-inspired individuals.[1] Moreover, inasmuch as the *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* focused on *churban, galut,* and *geulah,* to understand what Hashem tells us should be the correct approach to these topics, we are well-advised to study the sources thoroughly.

If we study the prophecies of *churban*, particularly those of Yirmiyahu, Yechezkel, and Yeshayahu, an overarching theme is how devastating and disastrous the *galut* would be. The book of Eicha promotes a similar view of the *Churban*. Here are two examples from Yirmiyahu:

שְׂאוּ נֵס צִיּוֹנָה הָעִיזוּ אַל תַּעֲמֹדוּ כִּי רָעָה אָנֹכִי מֵבִיא מִצָּפוֹן וְשֶׁבֶר גָּדוֹל. עָלָה אַרְיֵה מִסֻּבְּכוֹ וּמַשְׁחִית גּוֹיִם נָסַע יָצָא מִמְּקֹמוֹ לָשׂוּם אַרְצֵךְ לְשַׁמָּה עָרַיִךְ תִּצֶּינָה מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב.

Set up a signpost: To Zion. Take refuge, do not delay! For I bring evil from the north, And great disaster. The lion has come up from his thicket: The destroyer of nations has set out, Has departed from his place, To make your land a desolation; Your cities shall be ruined, Without inhabitants.
Yirmiyahu 4:6-7

עַל כֵּן הִכָּם אַרְיֵה מִיַּעַר זְאֵב עֲרָבוֹת יְשָׁדְדֵם נָמֵר שֹׁקֵד עַל עָרֵיהֶם כָּל הַיּוֹצֵא מֵהֵנָּה יִטָּרֵף כִּי רַבּוּ פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם עָצְמוּ משבותיהם [מְשׁוּבוֹתֵיהֶם].

Therefore, The lion of the forest strikes them down, The wolf of the desert ravages them. A leopard lies in wait by their towns; Whoever leaves them will be torn in pieces. For their transgressions are many, Their rebellious acts unnumbered.
Yirmiyahu 5:6

Alongside these and similar

prophecies and lamentations of doom and destruction, every *navi* who predicted and described the impending *galut* also included some *nevu'ot* of consolation, *nevu'ot hanechama*. In these, the *Nevi'im* foretell a better time, namely the *geulah*, when the *galut* will end. For example, Yirmiyahu 31:16 foretells:

וְיֵשׁ תִּקְוָה לְאַחֲרִיתֵךְ נְאֻם ה' וְשָׁבוּ בָנִים לִגְבוּלָם.

And there is hope for your future — declares the Lord: Your children shall return to their country.

Yechezkel 40-48 describes the building of the Third Temple and the division of the Land of Israel in the end of days. In most prophetic books written before and during the era of *Churban Bayit Rishon*, the theme of destruction, of gloom and doom, is much more pervasive than the theme of consolation. Nevertheless, the concept of consolation is spelled out clearly in the *pesukim* as a contrast to *galut*. The message is clear: when the terrible *galut* is over, *Klal Yisrael* will merit the *geulah* and thrive.

This essay will explore a different, less obvious form of consolation in these books of Tanach. Alongside the explicit references to *galut* as a negative experience, which will be ameliorated or reversed with the positive experience of *geulah*, the *Nevi'im* also articulated (albeit less prominently) the idea that *galut* in and of itself is beneficial for *Klal Yisrael*.

Galut Expiates Sin and Provides Kaparah

One way in which *galut* can be viewed as essentially a positive experience is in its ability to erase our sins. One sees this idea in the commentary on Yirmiyahu 5:1, where the *navi* says:

שׁוֹטְטוּ בְּחוּצוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַ͏ִם וּרְאוּ נָא וּדְעוּ וּבַקְּשׁוּ בִּרְחֹבוֹתֶיהָ אִם תִּמְצְאוּ אִישׁ אִם יֵשׁ עֹשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט מְבַקֵּשׁ אֱמוּנָה וְאֶסְלַח לָהּ.

Roam the streets of Jerusalem, Search its squares, Look about and take note: You will not find a man, There is none who acts justly, Who seeks integrity— That I should pardon her.

Yirmiyahu claims that in Yerushalayim there is not even one completely good person, for if there were, Hashem would forgive the city. Radak questions this statement, contrasting it with Ps 79:2, which describes the *galut,* saying:

נָתְנוּ אֶת נִבְלַת עֲבָדֶיךָ מַאֲכָל לְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּשַׂר חֲסִידֶיךָ לְחַיְתוֹ אָרֶץ.

They have left Your servants' corpses as food for the fowl of heaven, and the flesh of Your faithful for the wild beasts.

How can this verse identify the people who went into exile as *avadecha* (servants) and *chasidecha* (faithful), and yet Yirmiyahu claims there was not even one righteous person in Yerushalayim whose presence could have saved *Klal Yisrael*!? Radak answers this question with a principle considered in *Sanhedrin* 47a-b: When a person dies at the hands of a non-Jewish aggressor, as happened in the case of *Churban Bayit Rishon*, his/her sins are thereby expiated. Thus, *galut* cleansed those who died from sin, making Klal Yisrael as a group more righteous.

Galut Motivates Klal Yisrael to do Teshuvah

Yirmiyahu furthermore expresses the idea that *galut* and the travails surrounding it serve a purpose — they motivate people to return to Hashem. In 5:3 Yirmiyahu says, "*halo le'emunah hikitah otam*" — you struck them for integrity. R Yosef Qara explains that this pasuk means that when Hashem sentences someone to suffering, He does it so the person will return to Him. A tzaddik who encounters Hashem's justice will take it to heart and return to Him. Thus, *galut* motivated *Klal Yisrael* to *teshuvah* in a way that they had not been motivated previously.

We see this idea as well in Yirmiyahu 15:11, where Hashem responds to Yirmiyahu's complaints about his suffering at the hands of those who want to silence him. Hashem responds:

אָמַר ה' אִם לֹא שרותך [שֻׁרִיתִיךְ] לְטוֹב אִם לוֹא הִפְגַּעְתִּי בְךָ בְּעֵת רָעָה וּבְעֵת צָרָה אֶת הָאוֹיֵב.

The Lord said: Surely, a remnant of you will I spare for a better fate! Surely, I will have you struck down in a time of distress and a time of disaster by the enemy.

Most *parshanim* explain this *pasuk* as referring to Yirmiyahu himself, meaning that in reward for his suffering, Hashem allowed him to survive the *galut* and be released by the enemy general (Nevuzaradan) himself. Shadal, however, has a unique interpretation: the *pasuk* refers not to Yirmiyahu personally, but to all *Klal Yisrael*.[2] What Hashem is telling them is they should not view *galut* in a negative light, because ultimately all the suffering is for their benefit, for it spurs them to do *teshuvah*. Hashem consoles Yirmiyahu — he should not see himself as a prophet of doom, but of renewal. The destruction he predicts will benefit *Klal Yisrael* in the long term, to motivate them to do *teshuvah*.

Galut Spurs Klal Yisrael to Strengthen their Connection with Hashem

Another benefit of *galut* is that it spurs us to rely on Hashem and daven to Him. In his commentary on Deut. 32:15 Rav Hirsch expresses this thought. That *pasuk* predicts that when life is good, Yeshurun (the Jewish people) will get "fat" and they will abandon Hashem, their Creator — "ויטש אלוק עשהו וינבל צור ישעתו". Rav Hirsch sees this phrase as a predictor of their attitude to *galut*. When in *galut*, *Klal Yisrael* will rely on Hashem, in the absence of other supports, which will serve a positive purpose. However, in freedom, faith in Hashem became for them an antiquated belief (as the *pasuk* predicts), of little use in the era of abundance and success.

Galut Offers an Opportunity to Prove our Loyalty to Hashem

In several places, *nevi'im* speak about the reward Hashem will give *Klal Yisrael* for their suffering in *galut*. For example, Yeshayahu 62:11 foretells that at the time of Hashem's redeeming *Klal Yisrael*, He will bring along His reward:

הִנֵּה ה' הִשְׁמִיעַ אֶל קְצֵה הָאָרֶץ אִמְרוּ לְבַת צִיּוֹן הִנֵּה יִשְׁעֵךְ בָּא הִנֵּה שְׂכָרוֹ אִתּוֹ וּפְעֻלָּתוֹ לְפָנָיו.

See, the Lord has proclaimed To the end of the earth: Announce to Fair Zion, Your Deliverer is coming! See, his reward is with Him, His recompense before Him.

How is the reward related to *galut*? On that *pasuk* Radak says:

הפעולה הטובה שעשו בהחזיקם בתורתו ובמצותיו עם הצרות הגדולות.

The reward is for their good deed in continuing to hold on to His Torah and mitzvot even with the difficult travails.

The hardships of the *galut* challenge us, but by making life difficult, they allow us to prove the depth of our commitment to Hashem and thereby earn more reward.

The Only Direction We Can Go Following Galut is Upward

In *perek* 24, Yirmiyahu demonstrates the benefits of *galut* with an important analogy and image:

כַּדּוּד אֶחָד תְּאֵנִים טֹבוֹת מְאֹד כִּתְאֵנֵי הַבִּכֻּרוֹת וְכַדּוּד אֶחָד תְּאֵנִים רָעוֹת מְאֹד אֲשֶׁר לֹא תֵאָכַלְנָה מֵרֹעַ.

One basket contained very good figs, like first-ripened figs, and the other basket contained very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten.

Yirmiyahu 24:2

He portrays those who had already gone into the multi-stage *galut* as very good figs, while he portrays those who are yet to leave the Land of Israel for *galut* as bad figs that are not even edible. This image appears counter-intuitive — shouldn't the ones in *galut* be considered in worse shape than those who have not yet gone there? Abarbanel explains Yirmiyahu's image with a fascinating insight: since those who went into *galut* are no longer waiting for it, they are looking forward to the good. Having already hit rock bottom, they look forward to better times. On the other hand, those "not yet exiled" look forward only to great travail. Hence, they are worse off than those who have already gone into exile.

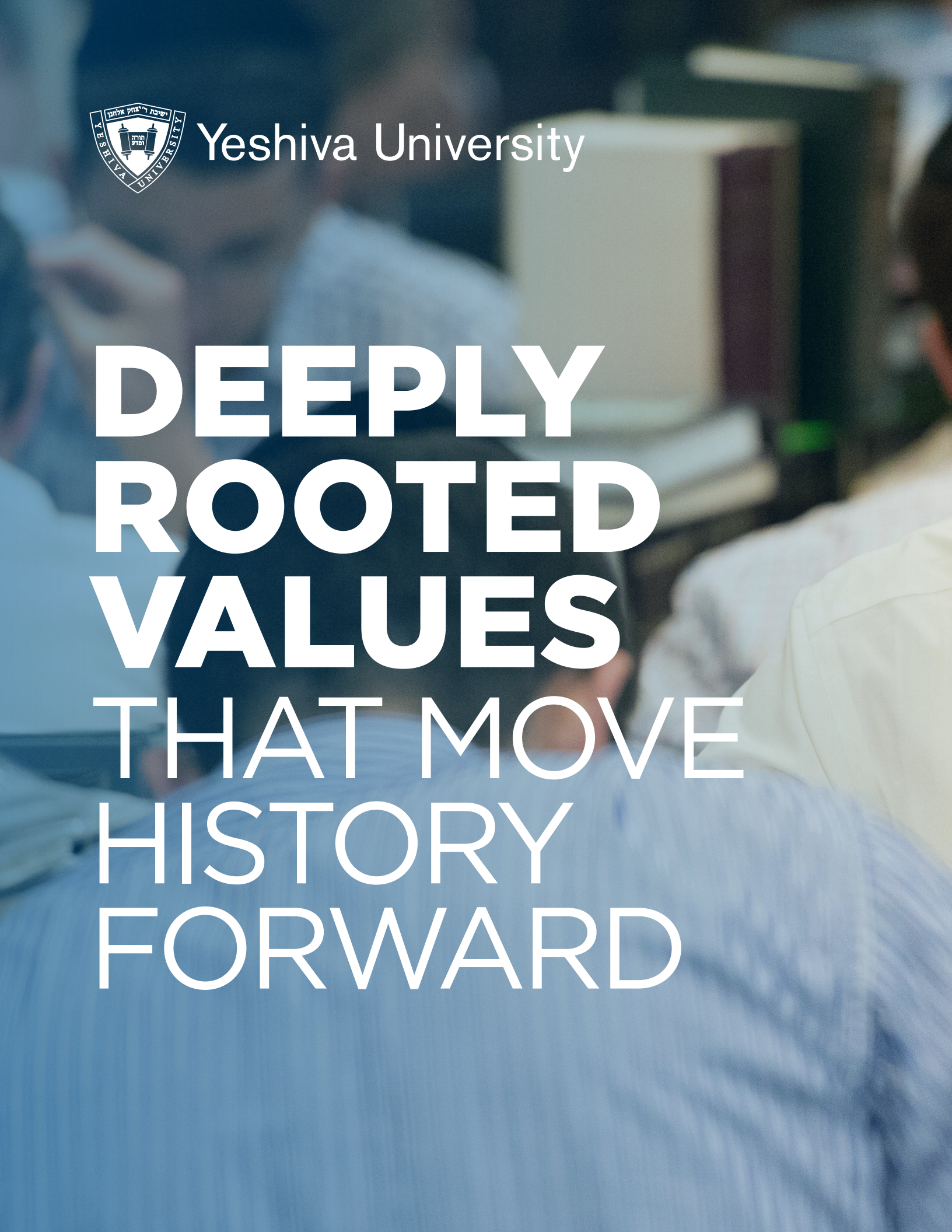
Conclusion

As we enter the time of year when we focus on the *Churban*, let us focus on the benefits that *galut* has afforded us and utilize its remaining potentialities to improve our religious devotion. In this way, may we be worthy of the explicitly predicted better future in the form of *geulah*, speedily in our days.

Endnotes

1. On the difference between *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*, See R' David Qimhi, introduction to Psalms.

2. This explanation fits well with 15:12-14 as well.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Relating to Churban and Galut

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TISHA B'AV SHECHAL B'SHABBOS

The emotions that mark the Jewish calendar, and, in turn, the Jewish heart, swing, like a pendulum, from moments of ecstatic *simcha* to mournful *aveilus*. Sadness to joy, joy to sadness. But one of the most paradoxical emotional states to calibrate is the one that is evoked by Tisha B'Av that occurs on Shabbos. On one hand, we cannot mourn due to the *kedusha* and delight of Shabbos, while on the other hand, how can we be blindly oblivious to the devastation and destruction that Tisha B'Av has wrought upon us this very day?

Concerning this dilemma, Chazal (Tosefta, *Taanis* 13:13) instruct us with deliberate precision:

תשעה באב שחל להיות בשבת אוכל אדם כל צרכו ושותה כל צרכו ומעלה על שלחנו אפילו כסעודת שלמה בשעתו, ואין מונע מעצמו כלום.

When Tisha B'Av falls out on Shabbos, one eats their fill and drinks their fill, and raises up on their table even like the feast of Shlomo HaMelech in his moment, and should lack nothing at all.

What was unique about the "feast of Shlomo Hamelech"? Shlomo Hamelech ruled in a time of fabulous Jewish prosperity, and his table surely reflected that wealth with extravagant opulence, as described in Melachim Alef 10:21:

וְכֹל כְּלֵי מַשְׁקֵה הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה זָהָב, וְכֹל כְּלֵי בֵּית יַעַר הַלְּבָנוֹן זָהָב סָגוּר; אֵין כֶּסֶף לֹא נֶחְשָׁב בִּימֵי שְׁלֹמֹה לִמְאוּמָה:

All the king's drinking vessels were gold, and all the palace's utensils were pure gold; silver was insignificant in the days of Shlomo.

When Shlomo was visited by Queen Sheba, who greeted him with lavish gifts and rare spices, the pasuk (10:5) describes her jaw-dropping astonishment regarding his royal feast:

וּמַאֲכַל שֻׁלְחָנוֹ וּמוֹשַׁב עֲבָדָיו וּמַעֲמַד מְשָׁרְתָיו וּמַלְבּוּשֵׁיהֶם וּמַשְׁקָיו... וְלֹא הָיָה בָהּ עוֹד רוּחַ:

The food of his table, the seating of his slaves, the station of his servants and their attire and his drink… took her breath away.

It is with this grand manner that halacha permits us to celebrate our Shabbos meals even when Shabbos falls out on a fast day as mournful as Tisha B'Av. Clearly, Chazal are teaching us that the mitzva of *oneg* (delighting in) Shabbos should entirely overshadow, if not cancel, the *aveilus* of Tisha B'Av. Yet the specific language they chose to convey this concept is peculiar — *k'seudas Shlomo b'sha'ato* — like Shlomo's feast in his moment. What is meant by that additional word *b'sha'ato* — "in his moment"?

Rav Meir Shapiro of Lublin, founder of Daf Yomi, offers an explanation that unravels the emotional mystique of the day based on the Gemara, *Gittin* 68b, which describes three distinct stages in the political and financial life of Shlomo HaMelech. In his early and late years he enjoyed great wealth and power, but for a brief point in between, Shlomo found himself both penniless and powerless:

על ההיא שעתא אמר שלמה: מה יתרון לאדם בכל עמלו... וזה היה חלקי מכל עמלי. מאי וזה? רב ושמואל, חד אמר: מקלו, וחד אמר: גונדו. היה מחזר על הפתחים...

Regarding that moment Shlomo uttered (Kohelet 1:3), "What is the worth of man for all his toil…" (Kohelet 2:10) "And this was my share from all my toil." What is meant by the words "And this?" Rav and Shmuel explained: One said his walking staff [was all he owned] and the other said his cloak [was all he owned]. Shlomo would knock on doors [asking for handouts]...

Apparently, our perspectives of Shlomo Hamelech's vast power and wealth are accurate for the majority of his reign. But there was a short window of time when Shlomo wandered like a vagabond. Rabbi Shapiro suggests that this period is what Chazal meant when they specified "like Shlomo's feast in his moment." Although from a Halachic perspective, our tables should indeed be laden with delicacies, perhaps from an emotional perspective, our Shabbos meals on Tisha B'av should reflect the spirit of Shlomo's circumstances during that in-between moment — a period of poverty set between a prosperous past and a glorious future. That period, specifically, captures the perfectly-calibrated emotion we should feel on *Tisha B'Av shechal B'Shabbos*, because it epitomizes our existence in two millennia of *galus*.

Shlomo's career commenced in prominence and concluded in prominence, but was punctuated with a short interval of poverty. Similarly, our present *galus*, as long and dreary as it seems, is a temporary aberration from a past enriched by the Beis HaMikdash and a future exalted with the final and eternal Beis HaMikdash. This, suggests Rabbi Shapiro, is precisely the emotion we are to feel today. Just as Shlomo endured that "moment," we endure it too, feeling the pain of our devastation, but reassured by the faith in our destiny. It is that faith that energizes us to sustain the galus.

The *Sefer Kol Bo L'Yahrzeit* (p. 280) relates an incredible story that illustrates this nuanced emotion:

Some time after the Holocaust, R' Chaim Shmuelevitz met a survivor of the concentration camps. "What gave you the will to persevere in the face of the Nazi atrocities you encountered?" asked the famed Rosh Yeshiva of Jerusalem's Mirrer Yeshiva.

The Jew responded by describing how the Nazis had stripped the inmates not only of their clothing and dignity, but of every conceivable mitzva. *Kashrus, tefillin, tzitzis, shabbos, mezuza* were all impossible. If the guards caught a Jew holding a *siddur* or even *davening* with his lips, the repercussions could be deadly.

"But there was one mitzva that the Nazis could not steal from us — the *mitzva* of *kiddush levana* (sanctifying the new moon)," added the survivor, "Because they could not hide the moon from us!"

He went on to describe how his group of friends calculated the approximate time for *kiddush levana* each month, and, as they marched through the darkness after a day of back-breaking labor, they would steal a glance upwards, squeeze one another's hand, and recite by heart its ancient words:

וללבנה אמר שתתחדש עטרת תפארת לעמוסי בטן שהן עתידין להתחדש כמותה.

Hashem instructed the moon to renew itself as a crown of glory to [the Jewish people] who, in the future, will renew themselves like the moon.

This thought renewed their spirits, girding them with the hope towards, and anticipation of, a glorious future, vastly different from the daily dread that they experienced. "And that," concluded this righteous Jew to Rabbi Shmuelevitz, "Is what strengthened our resolve to persevere through the darkness and pain, knowing that we, the Jewish people, have a bright future ahead."

As we sit down to our Shabbos meals on Tisha B'Av, let us not only feast on gastronomic delights as halacha dictates, but be comforted knowing that we are like both Shlomo Hamelech "in his moment" and like the moon. Our *galus* is bitter, but our destiny bright.

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Relating to Churban and Galut

Mrs. Bracha Rutner

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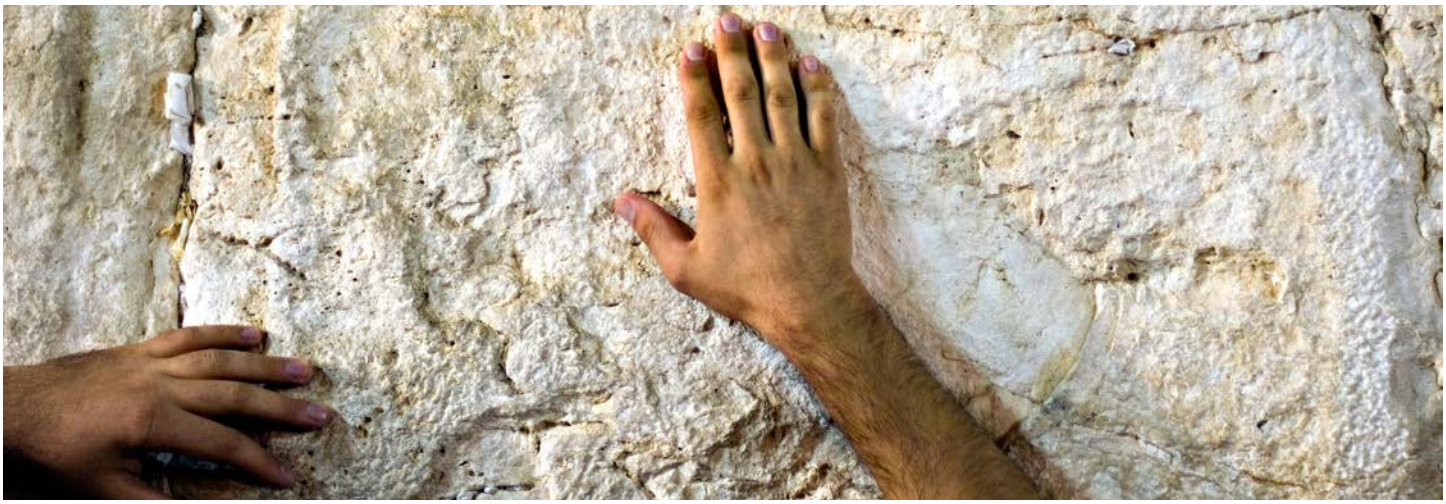

THE BITTERSWEET TRADITION: GRIEF AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BEIT HAMIKDASH

An apocryphal story is told of Napoleon Bonaparte entering a darkened synagogue and observing weeping Jews, sitting on low stools. Asking what misfortune had occurred to cause such behavior, he was informed that it was the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av. On that day, as Napoleon learned, Jews commemorate the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem and the fall of the Fortress of Betar. On hearing that story, Napoleon exclaimed: "A people that cries these past 2,000 years for their land and Temple will surely be rewarded."

These people were feeling grief at the loss of the Beit Hamikdash, even thousands of years after its destruction. There are different types of grief that people experience and sometimes that grief can overwhelm us.

In her book *Bittersweet*, author Susan Cain focuses on how to take pain and sorrow that might otherwise destroy us, manage it, and make it meaningful. Sometimes when we experience pain, we want to run away from it or deny it. But this pain is actually what makes us whole. What framework do we have for handling the pain and making us whole as individuals and as a people?

One way to approach grief is to engage in the grief and in the emotional experience. How do we do this?

The Gemara, in *Chagigah* 5b, provides us with a way. The Gemara describes how Hashem cries. But a question arises about this:

וּמִי אִיכָּא בְּכִיָּה קַמֵּיהּ דְּקָדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא? וְהָאָמַר רַב פָּפָּא: אֵין עֲצִיבוּת לִפְנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "הוֹד וְהָדָר לְפָנָיו עֹז וְחֶדְוָה בִּמְקוֹמוֹ"! לָא קַשְׁיָא: הָא בְּבָתֵּי גַוָּאֵי, הָא בְּבָתֵּי בַרָּאֵי.

The Gemara asks: But is there crying before the Holy One, Blessed be He? Didn't Rav Pappa say: There is no sadness before the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is stated: "Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and gladness are in His place" (I Chronicles 16:27)? The Gemara responds: This is not difficult. This statement, that God cries, is referring to the innermost chambers,

where He can cry in secret, whereas this statement, that He does not cry, is referring to the outer chambers.

We learn from here that even Hashem cries. Yet He cried in private. We might learn from here that in certain circumstances we may want to keep our grief more private. That is valuable and still a way to approach the grief. The remainder of the Gemara provides us with another way to engage in grief:

וּבְבָתֵּי בַּרְאֵי לָא? וְהָא כְּתִיב: ״וַיִּקְרָא ה׳ אלקים צְבָאוֹת בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לִבְכִי וּלְמִסְפֵּד וּלְקָרְחָה וְלַחֲגוֹר שָׂק״! שָׁאנֵי חֲרִבָּן בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, דַּאֲפִילּוּ מַלְאֲכֵי שָׁלוֹם בָּכוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״הֵן אֶרְאֶלָּם צָעֲקוּ חוּצָה מַלְאֲכֵי שָׁלוֹם מַר יִבְכָּיוּן״.

The Gemara asks: And doesn't God cry in the outer chambers? Isn't it written: "And on that day the Lord, the God of hosts, called to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth" (Isaiah 22:12)? The Gemara responds: The destruction of the Temple is different, as even the angels of peace cried, as it is stated: "Behold, their valiant ones cry without; the angels of peace weep bitterly" (Isaiah 33:7).

This is public, unified grief. And while this is a healthy way to approach grief, how do we ensure that it does not become overwhelming? The Rambam teaches the following in *Hilchot Ta'anit* 5:1:

יֵשׁ שָׁם יָמִים שֶׁכָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתְעַנִּים בָּהֶם מִפְּנֵי הַצָּרוֹת שֶׁאֵרְעוּ בָּהֶן כְּדֵי לְעוֹרֵר הַלְּבָבוֹת לִפְתֹּחַ דַּרְכֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה וְיִהְיֶה זֶה זִכָּרוֹן לְמַעֲשֵׂינוּ הָרָעִים וּמַעֲשֹׂה אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁהָיָה כְּמַעֲשֵׂינוּ עַתָּה עַד שֶׁגָּרַם לָהֶם וְלָנוּ אוֹתָן הַצָּרוֹת.

There are days that all the people of Israel observe as fasts on account of the tragic events that occurred on them, the purpose being to appeal to the hearts and to lay open the paths of repentance. This serves as a reminder of our evil doings, and the deeds of our fathers which were like ours now, resulting in the afflictions endured by them and by us.

We set aside specific times to grieve, and can appreciate the grief, and appreciate everything else in life.

In addition to this approach, or as an alternate approach to allowing our grief to be a learning experience, we teach the grief.

In the Gemara in *Brachot* 28b, we learn about Rabbi Yochanan's feelings on his deathbed.

וכשחלה רבי יוחנן בן זכאי נכנסו תלמידיו לבקרו כיון שראה אותם התחיל לבכות אמרו לו תלמידיו נר ישראל עמוד הימיני פטיש החזק מפני מה אתה בוכה? אמר להם ... ועכשיו שמוליכים אותי לפני ממ"ה הקב"ה שהוא חי וקיים לעולם ולעולמי עולמים שאם כועס עלי כעסו כעס עולם ואם אוסרני איסורו איסור עולם ואם ממיתני מיתתו מיתת עולם ואיני יכול לפייסו בדברים ולא לשחדו בממון ולא עוד אלא שיש לפני שני דרכים אחת של גן עדן ואחת של גיהנם ואיני יודע באיזו מוליכים אותי ולא אבכה.

When Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai was sick, his disciples went in to visit him. On seeing them, he began to weep. His disciples said to him, "O lamp of Israel, right-hand pillar, mighty hammer! Why are you crying?" ... [he answered them:] "Now, when I am being led into the presence of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, Who lives and endures for all eternity, Who if He is angry against me His anger is eternal. Who if He imprisoned me the imprisonment would be everlasting. Who if He condemned me to death the death would be forever, and Whom I cannot appease with words nor bribe with money — should I not be more worried? Before me lie two paths, one of the Garden of Eden and the other of Gehinnom (Hell), and I do not know which I am about to be led to, shall I not weep?"

What was bothering him so much? Why was he so worried? In the Gemara in *Gittin* 56a-b, we are told the story of the siege around Jerusalem. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai is snuck out of Jerusalem so he can meet with the head of the Roman forces. At the end of a lengthy conversation, Vespasian offers Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai the opportunity to make a request. Rabban Yochanan requests three things: healing for Rabbi Tzadok, preserving the dynasty of Rabban Gamliel, and the town of Yavneh and its sages.

There are those who criticize Rabbi Yochanan, but his calculation is realistic, pragmatic, practical, and based on facts. However, we learn that his decision was always gnawing at him, and he never made peace with it fully.

It is important for us to read both the Gemara in *Gittin*, of the heroic and difficult choice that Rabbi Yochanan made, and the Gemara in *Brachot* about his emotional response. When we share these stories and the debate about good choices and bad choices in the face of pain and anguish, we can very much relate and learn about our own grief and how, despite the fact that Rabbi Yochanan was worried that he made the wrong decision, he continued to lead his people and try to help them to survive.

And finally, there is a third model for managing grief, and that is to try and make our lives more meaningful. After the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, the rabbis were faced with a challenge: How would they bring the community together and maintain the identity of the Jewish people?

In response, they created a new center of Judaism — the city of Yavneh.

On the one hand, they never gave up hope of the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash. We see this through the various decrees that Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai makes in the Mishnah in *Rosh Hoshana*, including his decree that everyone must wave the lulav and etrog all the days of Sukkot, instead of just the first day, since this was the day it was done in the Mikdash. However, the Rabbinic leadership was not naïve, and they knew that there needed to be a new way to maintain a connection to Hashem and make Jewish life meaningful. And so, they shifted their focus to other practices and to learning.

In *Avot Derabbi Natan*, Chapter 4 we see what Rabbi Yochanan did:

אמר לו: אתה הוא רבי יוחנן בן זכאי, שאל מה אתן לך. אמר לו: איני מבקש ממך אלא יבנה. אלך ואשנה בה לתלמידי, ואקבע בה תפלה, ואעשה בה כל מצות האמורות בתורה.

He said to him: You are Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai. Ask and I will give you. He said to him: All I ask from you is Yavneh. I will go there and teach my students, and establish prayer there, and there I will fulfill all of the commandments that are written in the Torah.

After he requested Yavneh, he went to teach his students — we will establish tefillah in place of *korbanot* and we will fulfill all the mitzvot.

There were several other steps taken to ensure that Jewish life would continue and be meaningful.

Grief is a part of life. We can be overwhelmed by it in an unhealthy way, or we can look to the different approaches relating to the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash to make our grief meaningful.

They completed *Edyot*, testimonies and teachings of rabbis in different areas of Torah. They reinforced Torah learning as central to Judaism — establishing the phrase: *ein lo laHakadosh Baruch Hu b'olamo ela daled amot shel halacha* — Hashem's presence in this world resides within the four cubits of halacha (*Berachot* 8a). This gave new meaning and new purpose to the Jewish people, helping them manage their grief and live on as a people.

These three models for managing grief — approaching it in a healthy way, at a specific time; studying the grief; and finding new meaning after the grief — can help us in general manage sadness in our lives.

Grief is a part of life. We can be overwhelmed by it in an unhealthy way, or we can look to the different approaches relating to the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash to make our grief meaningful. The love we have lost — the physical building of the Beit Hamikdash, the closeness to Hashem — is the most difficult, and as the story of Napolean shows us, something that we continue to weep over; but it is also what can save us. According to Cain, "Living in a bittersweet state, with an intense awareness of life's fragility and the pain of separation, is an underappreciated strength and an unexpected path to wisdom, joy and especially communion."

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Relating to Churban and Galut

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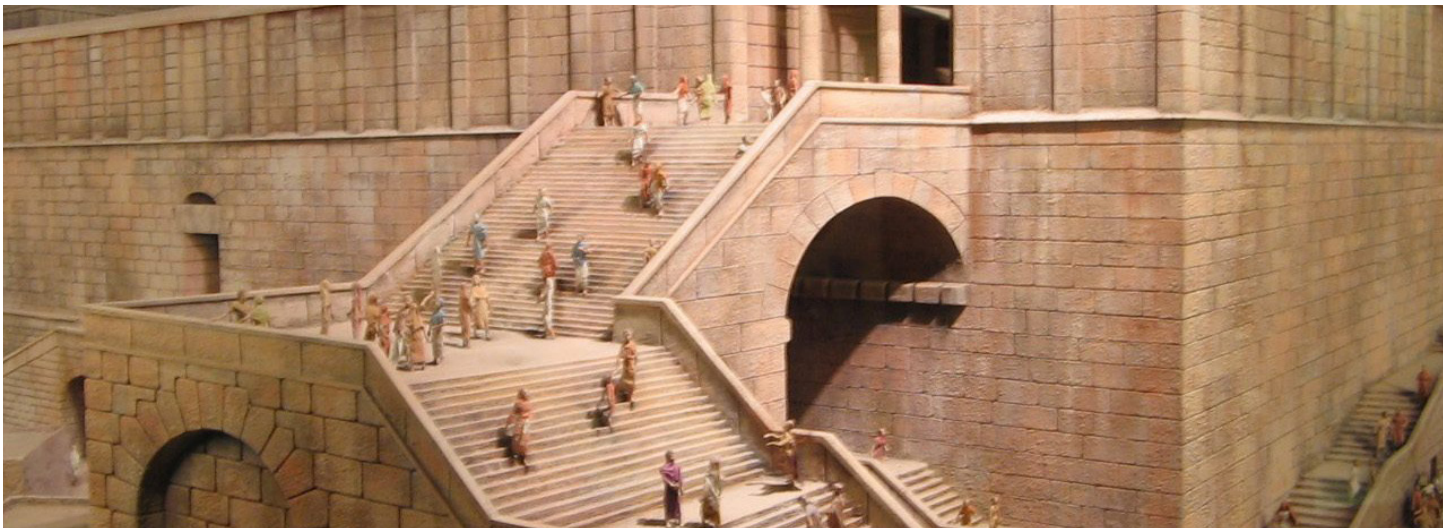

WHICH BEIT HA'MIKDASH WAS THE REAL ONE?

Historically (see Britannica.com, "Temple of Jerusalem"), the First Beit Ha'Mikdash was completed by King Solomon in the year 957 BCE and destroyed by the Babylonians in 587/586 BCE. Subsequently, the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash was completed by Ezra in the year 515 BCE and destroyed by the Roman Empire in the year 70 CE. Since that time, the Jewish people have been awaiting the establishment of the Third Temple.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, in a lengthy discussion in his commentary *Emet L'Yaakov* on Shemot, 12:2, develops a rather unique and creative perspective regarding the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash. Essentially, Rabbi Kamenetsky posits that the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash was not a completely authentic Temple. In fact, he describes the presence of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel upon their return as still being in *galut* (exile). In addition, the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash was, from its outset, designed to be temporary and relatively short lived. Its purpose was not so much to serve as a traditional location of sacrificial offerings as it was to provide the Jewish people a necessary respite from the existing diaspora. Rabbi Kamenetsky bases his thesis, in part, on the absence of the Aron, the Ark of the Covenant, during the entire Second Temple period. He demonstrates that its absence was not merely due to lack of knowledge of its location. It could not be present in the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash by virtue of that Temple's status of being inauthentic and transient.

After a relatively short exile period of seventy years, the spiritual character and wellbeing of the Jewish people were profoundly compromised, and the potential danger of a continued existence in exile was ominous. Thus, G-d saw it necessary to pause the exile with the establishment of a Second Beit Ha'Mikdash, which would reinvigorate the Jewish people spiritually, and perhaps, emotionally. It would allow Jews the opportunity to recommit to the basic principles of Jewish faith. Somehow, the Second Temple injected the Jewish people with sufficient, spiritual stamina to survive until the third and final Beit Ha'Mikdash is built.

I would suggest that Rabbi Kamenetsky's concept can be employed to understand a fundamental discussion in the Talmud regarding the cause of the destructions of the two Temples. The Talmud states (*Yoma* 9b) that the First Beit Ha'Mikdash was destroyed in response to the Jewish people violating the three cardinal sins of Judaism: murder, idolatry, and immorality. With respect to the Second Temple's demise, the Talmud attributes it to the sin of *sinat chinam* — baseless hatred among the Jewish people.

It seems that the respective causes of the destruction of the two Temples are quite disparate. During the Second Temple, Jews were fundamentally observant in all ways, engaged in Torah study and the performance of mitzvot. The Second Temple Jews didn't come close to committing the serious transgressions of the previous Temple's era. There was internal discord and divisiveness. Yet that doesn't seem to rise to the threshold of sin that should prompt the absolute destruction of the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash and the exile that accompanied it, compared to the guilt of the three most egregious sins of the Torah.

However, if we understand the existence of the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash as a pause in the exile and an opportunity to replenish the spirituality of the Jewish people, then *sinat chinam* is readily understandable as a trigger, rather than a cause, of destruction. The sin didn't have to be on the level of murder, idolatry, or immorality, since the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash was not a truly authentic institution. It was pre-designed to collapse at some point. A reason for its destruction was not necessary; a reason for its continued existence was. When the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash was no longer accomplishing its goal of strengthening Jewish values and religious commitment, its presence was without meaning. If animosity pervaded the Jewish people, then it is inconceivable that, in that context, the Beit Ha'Mikdash was providing any substantive, spiritual regeneration. If *bein adam l'chaveiro* responsibilities (interpersonal relationships) were deficient, then *bein adam l'Makom* observances (relationships with G-d) were not likely of significant virtue. Thus, the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash no longer served a purpose, and was, by default, to be destroyed.

One additional, more contemporary, application of Rabbi Kamenetsky's perspective relates to the establishment of Medinat Yisrael, the State of Israel. We state in the Tefillah for Medinat Yisrael that it is *reishit tzemichat geulateinu* — the beginning of the sprouting of our redemption. Medinat Yisrael is incomplete in terms of a final redemption, due, in large part, to the void that exists without a Beit Ha'Mikdash. The Third Beit Ha'Mikdash, which will be everlasting, will obviously fill that void in so many ways. Yet, the establishment and existence of Medinat Yisrael itself can be viewed as a modern-day equivalent of the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash by its having created a break in the exile of the past 2,000 years. Medinat Yisrael has infused a resurgence of spirituality for the Jewish people beyond quantification. It is *reishit tzemichat geulateinu* because this respite from the previous exile is not designed to be temporary. This "Second Temple" establishment of the State of Israel is designed to revive our spirituality and religious commitment, in order to lead ultimately to the third Beit Ha'Mikdash, which will be the most authentic and permanent one of Jewish history.

The establishment and existence of Medinat Yisrael itself can be viewed as a modern-day equivalent of the Second Beit Ha'Mikdash by its having created a break in the exile of the past 2,000 years.

Insights into Kinnot and Eicha

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READING BETWEEN THE LINES: FINDING MEANING IN EICHAH

One of the central motifs in the Tisha B'Av liturgy is that of challenging G-d. The rabbis who compiled the kinot audaciously ask G-d how He could have allowed such terrible events to befall the Jewish people. Specifically, Rabbi Elazar HaKalir and other *paytanim* begin a number of their kinot with the word "*eicha* (how)," a stinging and emotionally laden word that captures our feelings of betrayal. How, G-d, could You have let this happen?

The *paytanim*, of course, did not originate this concept. Megilat Eichah evokes the same themes of betrayal and dismay. In fact, in three of the five chapters of the Megilah, Yirmiyahu himself begins with the word, "*eicha*."

In chapter 1:

אֵיכָה יָשְׁבָה בָדָד

Oh, how has the city sits alone!

In chapter 2:

אֵיכָה יָעִיב בְּאַפּוֹ אֲדֹנָי אֶת בַּת צִיּוֹן

How has the Lord in His anger brought darkness upon the daughter of Zion!

In chapter 4:

אֵיכָה יוּעַם זָהָב

How dim the gold has become!

In fact, throughout the five chapters of Megilat Eichah, Yirmiyahu focuses almost entirely on bemoaning the fate of Jerusalem and her beloved people. Curiously, the Megilah places little emphasis on the guilt and culpability of the Jewish People.

There are, of course, a few exceptions. For example, in chapter 1, verse 8, Yirmiyahu declares:

חֵטְא חָטְאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל כֵּן לְנִידָה הָיָתָה

Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore, she became impure.

However, even this verse could be read as a challenge to G-d. In this interpretation, Yirmiyahu is asking, incredulously, "Did Jerusalem sin so egregiously that it must be treated as an impure woman?"

Rabbi Avraham Rivlin, Mashgiach Ruchani at Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, notes that while the Biblical text is largely silent on the issue of Israel's guilt, the Midrashic literature is replete with accusations, guilt, and culpability. The rabbis clearly understood that it is the Jewish people who are to blame for Jerusalem's destruction. We are to blame for all our ills, not G-d!

The Gemera (*Sanhedrin* 104a) illustrates this point by explaining that the fact that 4 out of the 5 chapters of Eichah are written as an acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet reflects the totality of the people's guilt.

אמר ר' יוחנן, מפני מה לקו ישראל באל"ף בי"ת, מפני שעברו על התורה שנתנה באל"ף בי"ת.

Rebbe Yochanan said: "Why were the

Jews stricken with aleph-bet? Because they violated the Torah, which was given through aleph-bet."

Chazal are sensitive to every textual nuance — both explicit and implicit. Even the format of the Biblical text has a message to teach. In this case, the aleph-bet format alludes to the gamut of our sins.

Other Midrashic sources are even more specific with regard to the Jewish people's responsibility for the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash. For example, the *Yalkut Shimoni* (Eicha no. 1003) records the following exposition of an exchange between Yirmiyahu and G-d:

דרש ר' אלעזר בנו של ר' יוסי הגלילי וכן דרש ר' חנינא אחריו . איכה ישבה בדד, אמר ירמיה לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע ער ששמך ושבחך בתוכה ורוב עמה בתוכה בשלשה רגלים תשב בדד. אמר ליה לירמיה עד שאתה דורש את שלהם דרוש את שלי איכה היתה לזונה קריה נאמנה.

Rebbe Elazar, the son of Rebbe Yose HaGalili, expounded, as did Rebbe Chanina afterward: "O how the city sits alone (Eichah 1:1)!" Yirmiyahu said in front of G-d, "Master of the Universe! The city that contains your name and praise, and the majority of your people, who dwell within it during three festivals, is now alone!" G-d responds to Yirmiyahu, "Until you seek out for them, seek out for me! How has she become a harlot, a faithful city (Isaiah 1:21)!"

In the Midrash, Yirmiyahu's "*eicha*" challenge to G-d is rebuffed by G-d with another reference to the word *eicha*. The Midrash draws upon Yeshayahu's blistering criticism of the Jewish people as they allowed Jerusalem to deteriorate from a city of righteousness to a city of moral depravity.

The Midrash is not simply making a play on the word *eicha*. By employing another verse that begins with the same word, the Midrash is fundamentally shifting the guilt from G-d's actions to man's actions. It is our moral decay that caused the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash.

The *Yalkut Shimoni* (ibid) continues its analysis with the second verse in Megilat Eichah:

וירמיה אמר בכו תבכה בלילה ודמעתה, ורוח הקודש אמרה לו והנה שם הנשים מבכות את התמוז.

And Yirmiyahu said, "She weeps in the night, and her tears are on her cheek" (Eichah 1:2). To this G-d responds, "And behold, there the women were sitting, making the Tammuz weep (Ezekiel 8:14)."

Here too, the Midrash is placing responsibility on the Jewish people. Yirmiyahu laments Jerusalem's destruction, describing the city's tears. G-d responds by quoting from a verse in Yechezkel in which Jewish women are worshipping an idol, a worship that involved tears. The message is clear — the Jewish people deserve the punishment that they are receiving.

Ultimately, the Midrash concludes:

וכן כל דבר ודבר.

And so it was for each and every matter.

Each verse of Eichah that seems to blame G-d is replaced by G-d's response in which He highlights the corresponding sins of the Jewish people.

An important message emerges from this view in the Midrash.

Chazal understood that difficult times beckon us to be introspective. As the Gemera (*Brachos* 5a) teaches:

אמר רבא ואיתימא רב חסדא: אם רואה אדם שיסורין באין עליו - יפשפש במעשיו.

Rava (and some said Rav Chisda) said, "If someone experiences suffering coming upon them, that person should look carefully at his deeds."

In other words, while we must never have the arrogance to state with certitude why G-d is acting in a certain fashion, that does not minimize our responsibility to look inward and ask, "What does G-d want me to learn? How can I become a better person under my current circumstances?"

Chazal's insistence to peer deeper than the explicit text of Megilat Eichah underscores the need to grow from our collective trials and tribulations.

Rabbi Soloveitchik articulates this point in his well-known essay, *Kol Dodi Dofek*. He writes:

The question of questions is: What does suffering obligate man to do? This problem was important to Judaism, which placed it at the center of its Weltanschauung… We do not wonder about the ineffable ways of the Holy One, but instead ponder the paths man must take when evil leaps up at him… How should a man react in a time of distress? What should a person do so as not to rot in his affliction?

While the need to look inward is relevant throughout the year, it is particularly meaningful on Tisha B'Av. The overall somber experience of Tisha B'Av has the potential to be demoralizing. Focusing on all the calamities that have befallen the Jewish People over the many centuries of the exile is painful. We run the risk of wallowing in our sorrows. By acknowledging that G-d's punishments are a call for us to reflect inwards, we can strive to be better Jews and, ultimately, be the recipients of G-d's blessing and reward.

Insights into Kinnot and Eicha

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SHORT INSIGHTS INTO KINNOS

Kinnah #6 שבת סורו מני

We are all familiar with the pasuk, "*im eshkachech Yerushalayim*," if I forget you, Jerusalem. The pasuk comes from Tehillim 137, which describes the Jews sitting on the banks of the Euphrates after being exiled from Eretz Yisrael. The kinnah (*al pnei Pras nuftzu chasideha*) references a midrash that gives the following background: As the Jews sat there, the Babylonians mocked them, asking them to play the songs that they played in the Beis Hamikdash and sing the songs of the Leviim. The righteous people said, "*eich nashir es shir Hashem al admas nechar*," how can we sing these songs on foreign land? (Tehillim 137:4). To avoid the pressure of doing so, they mutilated themselves so that they could not play the instruments or sing the songs of the Mikdash.

Shira seems to play an important role in the story of the Churban. In fact, Chazal (*Ta'anis* 29a) tell us that at the time of the actual Churban, the Levi'im were singing *shira*. Out of all of the tragedies to highlight about the Churban, why do we choose to focus on the loss of *shira*? The main *avodos* (services) in the Beis Hamikdash were the korbanos. The *shira* only served as an enhancement to the korbanos, and if a korban was brought without *shira* it was completely valid. Why do we focus on *shira*, which seems to be secondary to the korbanos themselves?

At the end of the *tochecha* in Parashas Ki Savo, the Torah tells us the root cause of the tragedies listed in the *tochecha*:

תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב מֵרֹב כֹּל.

Because you would not serve your God in joy and gladness over the abundance of everything.
Devarim 28:48

Even if we perform the mitzvos, if we don't do so with excitement and enthusiasm, it can be a cause for Churban. This is why we highlight *shira* in discussing the Churban and in the first kinnah of the day. It is true that we are supposed to spend Tisha B'Av crying over the Churban and the many tragedies that klal Yisrael faced. However, when that is over, and we want to fix our previous mistakes and bring about the rebuilding of the

Beis Hamikdash, we need to bring more passion and enthusiasm into the mitzvos that we perform.

Kinnah #16 זכור אשר עשה צר

This kinnah discusses the terrible acts that Titus did to defile the Beis HaMikdash. How is it possible that when the Beis Hamikdash was in its glory, the only one to ever enter the Kodesh Kodashim was the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur, and yet now, Titus can perform unspeakable acts in there? Chazal (*Shir Hashrim Rabbah* 3) tell us, "*kimcha techina tachant*," he was grinding ground flour. In other words, by the time Titus came, the Beis Hamikdash was already destroyed. Hashem decided to remove His Shechina. It wasn't the Babylonians or the Romans that destroyed our Batei Mikdash. It was our own *chataim*. The Babylonians and the Romans only destroyed the physical aspects of the Batei Mikdash.

But Titus didn't stop with destroying the Beis Hamikdash. He wanted to prove to the Romans what he did and so he decided to take the Klei Hamikdash, the vessels, back to Rome to parade them in the streets. This was forever memorialized on the famous Arch of Titus.

If we look at the depiction of the parade on the Arch of Titus, there is one vessel that stands out from the rest — the Menorah. Why did Hashem arrange for this Roman sculptor to make the Menorah the lasting symbol of destruction?

The Ramban (Bamidbar 8:2) tells us that the mitzvah of the Menorah was given in two parts: the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash and the Menorah of Chanukah. The Menorah of Chanukah is a symbol of our eternal connection to Hashem in *galus*.

Titus thought that by parading the vessels around Rome, he symbolically declared the destruction of klal Yisrael. In reality, he etched in stone the ultimate symbol of the eternity of klal Yisrael.

Kinnah #28 איך תנחמוני

The refrain of this kinnah is "*v'eich enachem*," how can I be comforted? It is true that Tisha B'Av is a day of mourning, but it is also a day that has some *nechama* built in. After midday, we get up from the floor, we sit in chairs, put our tefillin on and then recite *Nachem* in the Shemoneh Esrei of Mincha. Yet this kinnah seems to imply that *nechama* is impossible. How do we resolve this apparent contradiction?

The answer can be found in the last line of the kinnah:

עַד יַשְׁקִיף וְיֵרֶא מִמָּעַל, מוֹרִיד שְׁאוֹל וַיָּעַל, וְאָז אֶנָּחֵם.

Until He looks down from above, goes into the depths and raises [us] and then I will be comforted.

True *nechama* can only come from Hashem. He is the ultimate source of *nechama*. This is why we say to someone sitting *shiva*, "*Hamakom yenachem eschem*," the Omnipresent should comfort you. We cannot see the big picture and understand why certain events take place. Our *nechama* comes from knowing that Hashem runs the world and is watching over us.

Kinnah #45 אלי ציון

The last kinnah is recited standing up and with a tune that portrays a theme of optimism. We are not quite ready to move on to Tisha B'Av afternoon, where the focus is on *nechama*. Yet we are not sitting on the floor crying like we do during the other kinnos. What is the exact thought that we are trying to capture?

The words of the kinnah provide some insight:

אלי ציון ועריה כמו אשה בציריה.

Wail, O Zion and her cities like a woman in labor.

This kinnah compares our *galus* to a woman about to give birth. Her experience at the moment is extremely painful. Yet she knows that soon she will have a beautiful baby. This is how we end Kinnos. We spent the morning recognizing how difficult *galus* is and remembering all the tragedies that took place as a result. Now we look at them from a different angle — like the pain of a woman in labor — knowing that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that ultimately, all our suffering will lead to the rebirth of klal Yisrael, the rebirth of Eretz Yisrael, and the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, *bimheirah b'yameinu.*

Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Sobolofsky at https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-zvi-sobolofsky/

Insights into Kinnot and Eicha

Rabbi Neal Turk

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FREE WILL, WITH GOD'S HELP

It is customary to conclude the reading of Eicha with a repetition of the second-to-last pasuk:

השיבנו ה׳ אליך ונשובה חדש ימינו כקדם.
Bring us back to you, Hashem, and we will return, renew our days as of old.
Eicha 5:21

This is done in order not to finish the reading with harsh words such as the final pasuk of the megillah, but on a positive note of return to God.

We know this verse well, since it is recited, most notably, whenever we return the Torah to the Aron haKodesh. However, this familiarity should not blind us to the inherent problem contained within the pasuk: How could we ask God to return us to Him? Would that not be a violation of our free will? Shouldn't the initiative to return to God come from us? Why is it considered praiseworthy to be returning to God if it is God who decided to bring us?

This pasuk in Eicha is not the only place where we encounter this problem. We say in the tefilla three times a day:

השיבנו אבינו לתורתיך וקרבינו מלכנו לעבודתיך והחזירנו בתשובה שלימה לפניך.
"Bring us back, our Father, to Your Torah, Draw us near, our King, to Your Service, and return us to You in complete repentance…"

We ask Hashem to return us to the Torah and to His service. Isn't the decision to serve God in our hands? The rabbis teach us *hakol biydei Shamayim chutz miyiras Shamayim*. "All is in the Hands of heaven except for the fear of heaven." And Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuva* 5:3) calls the belief in free will *ikar gadol hu v'amud HaTorah v'hamitzvah* — "a great principle and the pillar of the Torah and mitzvos." If that is the case, how do we ask God to return us? Does this not limit our free will?

Authorities of various times have faced this problem, and have suggested varying responses to the question.

Abudraham (in Seder Shacharis shel Chol) says that, indeed, we cannot ask God to initiate the teshuva process for us, since that is our responsibility alone. We can, however, ask to be assisted with arriving at *teshuva sheleima*, a full and complete repentance. This is because the Gemara promises *ba letaher mesayin oso*, "one who tries to be purified will be assisted [from heaven]" (*Yoma*

38b). Once we have begun the process, God will help us along. But repentance must start with the person who takes action and moves in the right direction. Without taking the first step of our own free will, God will not act to help. When we ask God to move us toward repentance, we mean to have Him help us toward a higher level than one we would have reached on our own.

Maharsha deals with this issue in three different places, two in *Berachos* and one in *Makkos*. In *Berachos* 10b, he famously comments on the story in the Gemara where Bruria corrects her husband Rabbi Meir when the latter prays for those troubling him to die. Instead, she suggests, *ba'i rachami aluyhu d'lehadru b'teshuva*, "Pray for them to repent." He did, the Gemara reports, and they repented.

Maharsha is not troubled by the fact that they would be assisted in deciding to repent. Indeed, he claims, one can ask for such assistance. Even though, "all is in the hands of heaven except for the fear of heaven," there is another principle, namely, *b'derech she'adam rotzeh leilech, bah molichin oso*, "a person is assisted to move in the direction that he chooses." Therefore, he has a right to request that help be forthcoming for repentance. The problem Maharsha has with the story of Bruria and Rabbi Meir is that someone *else* is requesting that help, and not the person himself. In this case, it is Rabbi Meir who is praying to God that the offenders repent.

Interestingly, although Maharsha uses the principle of *b'derech she'adam rotzeh leilech, bah molichin oso* to solve the problem of asking assistance for repentance, in *Berachos* 10b, in *Makkos* 10b, where this statement originates, he explains it in a way that does seem to indicate that this principle itself violates what we know about free will. How could man be guided in a certain direction? Is it not all supposed to be his will and decision? Maharsha answers, apparently picking up on the fact that the text does not say "*God* moves him in the direction that he chooses," but that "he is assisted," that what moves him in that direction are the angels that are created with every thought. When we consider doing something good or bad, an angel is created. It is the angel that helps us move in the direction we choose to go. In modern parlance we would say that our thoughts act as motivation to action in one direction or another. It is not God moving us because we have free will. We are deciding for ourselves what we wish to do, and our thoughts are pushing us forward.[1]

In *Berachos* 33b, Maharsha finds another solution to the problem of free will by explaining that when the Gemara says *hakol biydei Shamayim chutz miyiras Shamayim*, everything is in the hands of Heaven except for fear of Heaven, it refers only to what he calls *yirah hasichlis*, rational fear, to be distinguished from *yirah hativ'is*, natural fear. The latter is sometimes brought on by God who might choose to punish in such a way so as to motivate good behavior. Rational fear, which the Gemara is referring to, is completely man's choice, and it refers to deciding to live a God-fearing life.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt"l, deals with the issue of free will and the seeming contradiction with requests of God to bring us to Him in the context of the Havinenu prayer, the abridged form of the Amidah. In *Ha'adam V'Olamo*, pp. 92-94, he analyzes the words in this prayer, *umol Hashem Elokeinu es levavenu*, "...and circumcise our hearts, Hashem, our God…," a phrase borrowed from the verse in Sefer Devarim 30:6. These words are used as a substitute for the bracha of *Hashivenu Avinu L'Sorasecha*. According to Rav Soloveitchik, this change actually answers the question of how we could ask God to determine matters of *yiras Shamayim*. The word *mol*, circumcise, means to uncover, which the act of circumcision accomplishes, and as Rashi states clearly in Vayikra 19:23. The request to God is not to make our decisions for us, but to uncover and expose to us what we need in order to make good decisions for ourselves. We ask for an uncovering of the heart, that is to say, an understanding of what inhibits us from making the correct choices. Exposure to our inner selves will help us to use our free will wisely. We also beseech God to remove whatever stops us from understanding the lofty messages of the Torah. Our earthly desires and

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shortsighted aspirations inhibit us from spiritual accomplishments. If only we could see beyond immediate comforts and luxuries, we would be open to higher messages. For this reason, Rav Soloveitchik explains, the Havinenu prayer uses a phrase different from what is found in the Amidah, circumcision of the heart, which contains an explanation of how we could ask for such things. We are merely asking God to move the distractions out of the way, uncover our hearts, so that we can make good decisions.[2]

Chazon Ish (Moed, Hashmatos no. 156 and Taharos, Hosafos 299a) offers a completely different solution to our problem. He says that asking God for assistance is actually an exercise of free will. It was free will that brought us to request what is good and proper. Once a person has made such a request, the action taken by God to help in returning to Him is attributed to the person who showed his desire for repentance by asking. The first step is to want it, and once God sees this by having received the request, it can be said that the one who requested it,is the one who took the action.[3]

Chasam Sofer takes a similar approach. In a comment on *Berachos* 33b, on the words *hakol biydei Shamayim chutz miyiras Shamayim*, he explains that reaching fear of Heaven is something that very few can do on their own. It is clear that we need assistance to succeed in this lofty goal. This lesson of Rabbi Chanina (who espouses this principle) teaches that we must *desire* to have *yiras Shamayim*, and then God steps in to help us achieve the fear of Heaven. The aspiration for *yiras Shamayim* is what God asks of us. Chasam Sofer sees this in the verse *mi yiten v'haya levavam ze l'yirah osi*, "Who can make it so that their heart should remain in fear of Me…" (Devarim 5:26). If they *want* their heart to fear God, they have done what is expected of them, and God will do the rest.[4] Free will expresses itself in the desire for what is good. Chasam Sofer and Chazon Ish both see the early stages of asking for something, or even merely wanting it, to be sufficient for free will to have been exercised. At that point, when God steps in and brings the person the rest of the way, the success is attributed to the individual, accomplished through his free will.

Megillat Eicha concludes with a fervent prayer to God to return us to Him. God doing this for us does not violate our fundamental belief in free will for any or all of the reasons presented above.

The Kotzker Rebbe turns the issue on its head by claiming that *God Himself* has no free will in this matter. The Kotzker has an original interpretation of the Talmudic phrase: *hakol biydei Shamayim*, everything is in the hands of heaven. It is God's decision to grant, or not to, everything which you ask. *Chutz miyiras Shamayim* — except for the fear of Heaven. If you request fear of heaven, God, k'viyachol, has no choice — he *must* grant it.

Take full advantage, says the Kotzker Rebbe, ask God to grant you *yiras Shamayim* — you are guaranteed to come out ahead.

Endnotes

1. Arizal, in *Shaar HaKavanot, Kavanas Ha'Amidah* no. 6, also alludes to the creation of "angels, lights, and defenders" which come about through the performance of mitzvot, when he raises the issue of free will in the bracha of *Al HaTzadikim*. In that part of the Amida we ask *v'sim chelkenu imahem*, "place our portion with them (the righteous)." How can it be that we ask such a thing if being among the righteous is a matter of free will? Arizal explains that when one sins those angels which were created through mitzvot are withheld from the person, and are held by someone else for safekeeping. However, there are some people who may be reluctant to relinquish these defenders when the person who created these mitzvah angels repents. Therefore, we pray to place our portion (i.e. the angels which we created) with them (the very righteous who do not wish to benefit from others' angels and will return them to us when we are deserving). Clearly, this explanation solves the problem of free will since we are not asking God to do anything which should be our choosing. I thank Rabbi David Holzer and Rabbi Zecharia Holzer for sharing with me this source, referenced in a footnote in *The Rav Thinking Aloud*, Sefer Shemos, p.68.

2. The Rav's explanation brings to mind the commentary of Seforno on the Torah (Shemos 7:3) which deals with the well-known question of how God could harden the heart of Pharaoh and thus take away his free will. Seforno suggests that the normal reaction of someone who had undergone the plagues would be to immediately release the slaves. Therefore, hardening his heart was necessary in order to *restore* his free will. Similarly, the Rav here is saying that our request to God is to give us the opportunity to access our free will by removing obstacles we have in the way.

3. Chazon Ish uses this explanation to answer the question of Maharsha in *Berachos* 10b. Once we understand that God helping us to repent is not a diminution of free will if we have asked for His assistance, it is also reasonable that one Jew can ask for the Almighty's help for another Jew since we are all *k'ish echad*.

4. See Ramban for a very different understanding of the pasuk.