

UNEDITED INTERNET VERSION

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3 WEEKS TALKS

17th of Tamuz • The Three Weeks
• The Nine Days • TishaB'Av

Collection of Drashas from the
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<http://bilvavi.net/sugya/bein>

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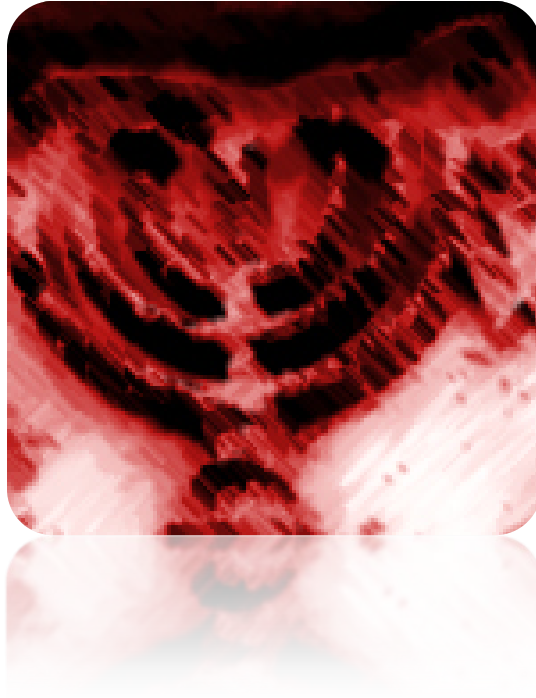
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17th of Tamuz

01 | *From Exile To Redemption on 17th Of Tamuz*¹

The Broken Luchos

Five tragedies happened on the 17th of *Tamuz*. The first of these tragedies was the breaking of the *Luchos*. On *Tisha B'Av*, there was “weeping at night”, as it is written in *Eichah*. But the root of all the weeping and tragedies was that the *Luchos* were broken, on the 17th of *Tamuz*.

When a person cries, the tears fall onto his cheeks, which are called “*lechi*” – from the word “*Luchos*.” This hints to us that that the broken *Luchos* are the root of all crying.

Tears Come From Being “Mixed”

The Gemara states that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote the last words of the Torah with tears. Tears, “*dema*”, comes from the word “*medemah*”, which means “mixture.” This shows us that tears stem from the fact that the exile has caused us much “mixture.” In other words, the exile has mixed us all up.

The saddest part of this whole exile we are in is that we are mixed with the non-Jewish nations of the world. Not only were we exiled from our home, Jerusalem, but we have been exiled to places that are not our home, and we are now mixed with them. *That* is the real meaning of exile.

Mixed Up With The World

The non-Jewish “language” has entered our society; although we state that “*we are exalted from all languages*” as we say in the *Shemoneh Esrei* of Yom Tov, still, exile has caused foreign languages and interests to enter us. The “beauty of Yefes” has entered the “tents of Shem”, in the negative sense: the ways of the gentile world has entered us and affected us.

The Sages say that in Egypt, we didn’t change their language, manner of dress, and our names. That was the greatness of that generation. Being so long in exile, however, has brought in the non-Jewish lifestyles into our society.

Being in exile means that we are connected to a place where we don’t belong. The root of all exile was the sin of Adam, when he ate from the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil) and subsequently exiled from Gan Eden. Ever since, mankind has been in exile, in a place where he doesn’t belong.

¹ <http://bilvavi.net/english/bein-hamitzarim-018-exile-redemption-0>

We have been spread out among the nations, and good and evil has become mixed together in the world as a result from the first sin; we are amidst that mixture. Good and evil were initially supposed to be separate, which was the state that existed before the sin. After the sin of Adam, good and evil became mixed together, and this paved the way for our dispersal among the nations, where we are mixed into the giant mixture of good and evil that fills the world.

When we received the Torah at Har Sinai, we were elevated to the level of before the sin. But soon after that, with the sin of the Golden Calf, we became connected again to evil. Moshe came down from the mountain and as soon as he saw what had happened, he broke the *Luchos*. Thus the sin with the Golden Calf caused about the breaking of the *Luchos*; thus the breaking of the *Luchos* has come to symbolize the root of all tragedies in our history.

So how do we leave the exile, and merit redemption?

Breakdown of Society: The Absence of 'Daas'

The body and soul are interconnected forces. Although the body and soul are opposites, Hashem made Creation this way, "*mafli laasos*" (a wonder), that the body and soul are able to live together in harmony. Yet, as amazing as this is, it is always the source of all ruination. The fact that the soul is connected to the body makes us able to connect to evil. When good and evil are interconnected, that causes all the problems.

A person only sins when he is missing his *daas* (real mind). The Sages state that "A person does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters him."² As the End of Days draws closer - the perfected light of Moshiach, which will bring us to the ultimate closeness with Hashem - things are happening in our generation which really do not make any sense. All human decency has been broken! There is so much evil on this world, and people are connected to it, without even thinking that anything is wrong with this. People are missing their *daas*, and that is why they sin; as Chazal say, that a person only sins when a "spirit of folly" enters him. The sins that people do today really don't make sense; yet people are sinning anyway - because they have lost their *daas*.

Today, we are in the "exile of the *Erev Rav*" (Mixed Multitude).³ The evil force of the *Erev Rav* is essentially defined by the fact that they 'mix' evil into the Jewish people. One of the meanings of the word "*erev*" means "mixture." All of the evil in the world has been mixed up with all the good, and this is due to presence of "mixing" power of the *Erev Rav*.

We do not know when the end of the exile will be; it was never revealed to anyone. It is supposed to remain a secret. "*Liba l'pumei lo galya*", "matters of the heart are not revealed by the mouth." But we do know that there is a certain plan that must happen, and we know that there is a general way of

² *Sotah 2a*

³ See *Tefillah #085 – Erev Rav Today; and Chanukah #048 – Greek Influence Today; and Derashos #086 – Exile Of Past and Present*

how we can come out of the exile. Evil and good are mixed together, more than ever before – and we need to disconnect ourselves from this mixture, in order to leave the exile.

Without our ability of *daas*, we lose connection to the power of good, and we instead connect to evil. That is what happens when there is no *daas*: a person leaves the side of good and instead connects to the side of evil. Without *daas*, a “spirit of folly” enters a person and he sins; sins which don’t even make sense.

In our generation, there is a great and terrible mixture that is rampant. In Eretz Yisrael, there is so much good; there are many people who keep the Torah and mitzvos, and with great dedication. Yet at the very same time, Eretz Yisrael has become a giant melting pot of countries from all over the world: Arabs, Africans, and many other nations, all here at once. Good and evil are very mixed together over here, and we are amidst this huge mixture, connected to all the evil.

How You Can Leave the Exile

Hashem is called the *makomo shel olam*, “Place”, of the world.⁴ This world is His; it is His place. Hashem is our true “place” where we need to be connected to. We have no other “place” that we belong to.

We have to leave our connection to the giant mixture of good and evil in this world and instead connect ourselves to Hashem. If one is connected to Hashem wherever he is, he is considered to be out of this exile - for he is in his true ‘place’.

If someone wants to leave the exile, he can do it even now. The time for the end of the exile hasn’t come yet, but in our soul, we can leave the exile! We can leave the exile, right now, in our own soul – if we make sure to always be connected to Hashem, wherever we are.

These are not ideas; this is rather a great revelation to anyone who truly seeks to grow spiritually. This is how we can gain back the *daas* that we need to survive the mixture of good and evil we are amidst: by connecting ourselves to Hashem, wherever we are.

What To Cry About On Tisha B’Av

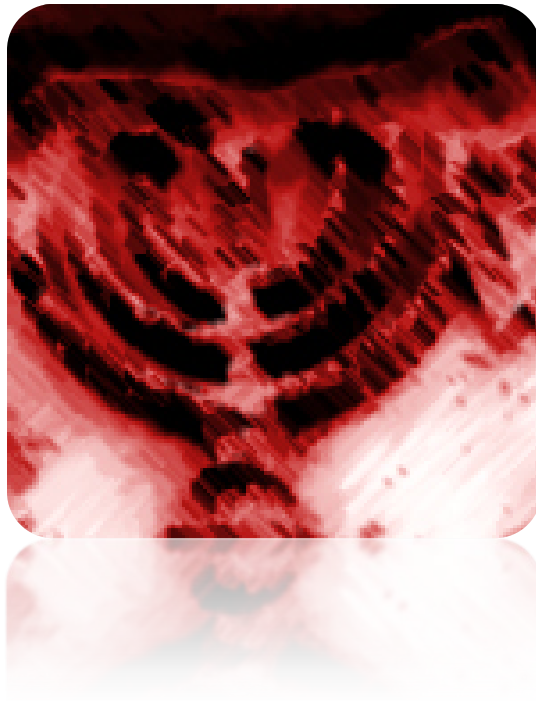
When we cry over the tragedies of the exile, we must realize why we are crying. We are crying over the great mixing up that this exile has caused – the great mixture of good and evil in the world. All of this exile, all its tragedy, is all because we are mixed up – we are mixed with good and evil at once.

If a person wants to know if he will merit *Mashiach*, he can ask himself if he always feels connected to Hashem wherever he is. If he is, then it can be said of him that he has the coming of

⁴ See *Nefesh HaChaim, Gate III*

'*Mashiach*' in his own soul - and he will also merit the coming of *Mashiach* that will come to the general masses.

May we merit to truly shed even one true tear over this exile: over the fact that we are mixed together with evil of the world. Through this, may we all merit the redemption.



The Three Weeks

02 | *Building The World*⁵

Binah/Binyan – The Power To ‘Build’ Through Our Understandings

הַשֵּׁם מְלַמֵּד לְאִנוּשׁ בִּינָה Hashem teaches “*binah*”, intuition, to us.

The word *binah* is related to the word *binyan*, to build. Torah scholars are called “builders” – they are blessed with the power of *binah*. When a person exerts himself in learning Torah, he is really building the world.

How can we reveal our power of *binah* to build the world – and to be more specific, to rebuild the *Beis HaMikdash*?

The Depth Behind ‘Sinat Chinam’ (Baseless Hatred): A Viewpoint of Disparity

Chazal tell us that the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *sinat chinam* (baseless hatred)⁶. What is the root of *sinat chinam*? From where does this negative emotion come from?

Simply, it comes from being egotistical. When a person only cares about himself, he couldn’t care less about others, so he will hate others for no reason.

But the deeper understanding is as follows.

When we build a structure, a brick is placed on top of another. Hashem created many details in Creation; we are all like many bricks that need to get added together, and form the complete structure of Creation. All details in Creation are many parts of one whole which will ultimately have to come together.

When we see the world – inanimate objects, as well as people – from a superficial perspective, we do not see how all these connect. But it is this superficial perspective which actually brought about the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*!

We are supposed to see how all the details in Creation are really meant to come together and form a structure. Therefore, the many details going on in Creation are not just a bunch of random details. They are many parts of one whole, which need to come together in a structure. The purpose of everything is always one and the same – to come together, to become unified, and form one structure.

Applying this to our own development, when a person is young, he doesn’t connect outward beyond himself. When he gets a little older, he begins to realize that there is a Creator, and he wants

⁵ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-056-rebuilding-world>

⁶ *Yoma 9b*

to connect with the Creator, but he does not necessarily see connection with others as part of his connection with the Creator. If a person gets a little wiser, he realizes that his connection with the Creator really depends on how he connects with others.

When a person views Creation through a lens of disparity, this was the perspective which enabled destruction to come to the world. This is the depth behind *sinas chinam*.

Sinas Chinam – To Be Inwardly Apart From Other Jews

Even more so, *sinas chinam* means “I can live on my own; I don’t need other Jews in order to exist.”

What about the *mitzvah* to do *chessed*? The person rationalizes, “*Chessed* is like any other *mitzvah* that is outside of myself, like shaking a *lulav*. I don’t need *chessed* to exist.” When a person views Creation with disparity like this, that is *sinas chinam* – this perspective is what destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*.

What was the *Beis HaMikdash*? It was the place that contained the *Shechinah*. But what is the *Shechinah* about? It is about Hashem’s Presence dwelling in *Klal Yisrael*, when we are in union. When we are not unified and we are instead apart from each other in our hearts, there is no point of having the *Shechinah*.

“The king is called the heart of the nation”; Hashem called is our “heart”. But if our hearts are full of disparity towards each other, and we each feel like we can survive without other Jews, then our damaged heart will not allow Hashem to be the heart of the nation, and thus the *Shechinah* will not dwell among us.

Sinas chinam has two layers to it. The outer layer of it is to show signs of hatred, simply speaking. The essence of *sinas chinam*, though, is that a person feels himself apart from other Jews, that he feels fine without other Jews, that he feels like he can live without other Jews. *Sinas chinam*, at its core, is to have a perspective of disparity towards Creation, a lack of awareness that Creation is supposed to become unified.

Moving In The Opposite Direction of Sinas Chinam

How do we go in the opposite direction, then, and get *ahavas chinam* (‘baseless love’)? We know that we have a *mitzvah* to love other Jews like ourselves but, how do we actually get it?

Simply speaking, we need to get rid of *sinas chinam* and reveal our deep *ahavah* for other Jews that we have really deep down. True, but there is more to it.

Ahavas chinam is when we realize, “I cannot exist without another Jew’s existence, for we are all part and parcel with one another.” There is no individual Jew who can live without another Jew’s

existence; when we internalize this understanding, we reveal *ahavas chinam*. Thus, hatred can only exist when a Jew thinks he can exist fine without another Jew.

This perspective of *ahavas chinam* is the power that can rebuild the Beis HaMikdash, as well as the world as a whole.

Learning Torah To Build The World

As an example, when a person learns Torah, does he realize he is building the world? Or is he learning it all for himself...?

Learning Torah is what unifies the details of the world together. When a person learns Torah, he must be aware that his learning causes unity in Creation, for Torah is the root of all souls. But if a person is learning Torah and he has no love for other Jews, he's learning Torah all for himself, and such Torah does not build the world.

Uprooting Hatred, and Getting To The Root of Love

The Rambam describes our *middos* as “*daas*”. The essence of all our *middos* and emotions is *daas*. The depth of *ahavas chinam*, and removing *sinas chinam*, is thus not by working with our emotions. Our emotions of love or hatred can only be the **result** of what perspective we have deep down. If we reveal *daas* – and we come to actually sense it – then we can reveal love.

We know that doing things for other people can bring love, for “the heart is pulled after the actions”, but at the same time we must realize that we need *daas*. When we do actions for others, we need to reveal *daas* with it – to realize that we must unify with others.

To uproot *sinas chinam*, and to develop *ahavas chinam*, we need to **do good actions** for others and help others, but along with this, we also need to **reveal our *daas*** – to realize that we need to unify with others. It is a perspective which we need to gain on how we view others. This is the way to access the real emotion of love for other Jews.

Destruction comes when we are missing this perspective.

Love For Other Is Not A Novelty

What does it mean to love? It is not simply to shower love upon others. Love is when we reach our *daas*, when we connect with others, by realizing that all of Creation needs to become unified.

When a person gets married, he believes this is his *bashert* (soul-mate). He believes the words of Chazal that finding a wife is like finding his lost object. He does not view the love towards his wife

as something new; he realizes that he is revealing a reality which is already there, for Chazal say that husband and wife were already destined to be bound together in love.

In the same way, we should view other Jews in Creation – our love for other Jews must not be some novel concept to us. When you meet another Jew, don't think to yourself that *Ahavas Yisrael* is some new concept that you have to work on. Rather, it is the reality, and you need to align your way of thinking with that reality. This is because we are all one at our root.

The only reason why we don't feel that unity is because we are currently living in a world of darkness, which blurs us from seeing the true reality. Therefore, we feel apart from each other, but it's only because we are not in touch with reality.

What We Cry About on Tisha B'Av

We cry on *Tisha B'Av* over the ruins of Jerusalem, which lies in disgrace. We are living in a time of *hester panim* (concealment of Hashem's revelation). But even more than so, we should cry about an even more painful situation: there are many of our fellow Jews today who are going through all sorts of pain, suffering, and predicament. In our times we live in, our fellow Jews today have both physical suffering as well as suffering of the soul.

We cannot really cry over the destruction of Jerusalem if we do not feel unity with other Jews. Why we do we cry on *Tisha B'Av*? Is it because we can't bring our own *Korbonos* for ourselves? Or are we crying because we don't have the *Korbonos* that atone for the entire congregation...? Which of these aspects means more to you...?

In Conclusion

“Whoever mourns Jerusalem, will merit to its rebuilding.” Even if we do not merit the actual rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*, we can each have a part in its rebuilding, when we build the world through the deeper understanding that comes from our “*daas*”, towards our relationship with the other Jewish souls.

May we all merit to unify with other Jews, as one piece, and come together into one structure, in which “Hashem will be One, and His Name will be one”.⁷

03 | Hoping For The Full Revelation⁸

⁷ For more on how we can strive for erase baseless hatred from our midst and strive for unity, see the 'Unity' pdf.

Hoping: What Is It That We Hope For?

The blessing of **אֵת צִמְחָה דוֹד** concludes with **כִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוִינֵנו כָּל הַיּוֹם**, “For in Your salvation we hope for every day.” We hope for the salvation of Hashem, for His full revelation in the world – for the entire world in general, and in particular, for *Klal Yisrael*.

There are a few terms for the word “hope”: “*ichul*”, (wishing), “*tzifyah*” (awaiting), and “*tikva*” (hope).

The word *ichul* comes from the word *chalal*, “empty space.” This is when a person feels empty, therefore he hopes to fill the emptiness. If a person fills the *chalal* in his soul, he doesn’t feel a need to have any hope, because he is content. Thus, the concept of hoping - *ichul/tzifyah/tikva* - depends on how much we feel missing.

If we don’t feel what we are missing in not having a *Beis HaMikdash*, even if we know about it intellectually how great it was, we are missing the recognition of what we are missing. This will result in a lack of hope. In order to have more *tzifyah*/hope, we need to first recognize what we are missing in the first place - the *chalal*, the void.

The *Keren Dovid* which we await - the salvation of the future - we must first reflect into it with our mind, and then let it settled on our heart.

“Ichul”: Reflecting Into What We Are Missing

We are missing the *Beis HaMikdash*. The first two temples were destroyed, and the third *Beis HaMikdash* isn’t here. Even more so, the Sages state that each day is more cursed than the day before it. In order to really have *tikva*/hope for the salvation, we first need to see what we are missing in this generation. The more we see how much we are missing, the more we feel the spiritual void now in the world, we will then wish to come out of it.

If someone simply tries to await the salvation of the future – whether it is during the rest of the year or whether it is during the Three Weeks, in which we contemplate the destruction – such hoping is superficial. We first need to deeply reflect, through an inner lens, into the void of the generation, to feel how Hashem is a *Keil Mistater* (Hidden G-d) to us now, He is concealed from us.

The word *chalal* is from the word *chilul Hashem* – the depth of this is that there is a void of feeling His presence, and that is the depth of the current situation of *chilul Hashem*. *Ichul* means that a person wants to fill the *chalal*, to fill the *chilul Hashem*. That is the first level of this *avodah* in hoping for the salvation: to wish that the *chalal* be filled.

“Tzifyah”: Reflecting Into The Future

The higher aspect of hoping for the salvation is *tzifiyah* (lit. “awaiting”). The word *tzifiyah* is from the word *tzofeh*, to see. It means to “see” the words of our Sages and prophets, about both past and future. *Tzifiyah* is to hope for the future prophecies, to hope for the fulfillment words that we read.

This comes from a clarity seen through one’s *daas*. The more a person increases his *daas*, the more he has true feelings, the more he has hope for the future fulfillment of the prophecies.

Hoping That The “Covering” Be Removed

Tzifiyah can also come from the word *tzipuy*, a cover.

Earlier⁹, it was explained that the inner world is really here in front of us, it is just hidden from us. At first a person needs to wish that the void be filled, which is called *ichul*. Then, he needs to hope for the future, which is *tzipiyah*. But then comes a deeper aspect of this *avodah*, and it is another meaning of *tzifiyah*: it is to realize that all is here, it is just covered over. That is the depth of *tzifiyah*: that *tzifiyah* is from the word “*tzipuy*,” everything is covered over, but it’s all here.

The Sages state the third *Beis HaMikdash* will come down in a fire from Heaven. The depth of this is it’s already waiting in Heaven to descend onto Earth, where it will be fully revealed out in the open. The superficial understanding of this is that the *tzaddikim* in each generation build the third *Beis HaMikdash*. This is true, but there is a deeper way to understand it.

Yaakov said he saw the *Beis HaMikdash* on *Har HaMoriah*, even though it wasn’t here yet. The depth of this is because the Avos represented each of the temples. Avraham represented the first *Beis HaMikdash*, Yitzchok is parallel to the second, and Yaakov is parallel to the third. The third *Beis HaMikdash* can be seen when a person accesses it, thus, Yaakov saw it, for he represented it.

We hope it will be rebuilt – both in the physical sense as well as in the inner sense, that it come down perfectly from Heaven; that we should “await the salvation” - to await that the covering be removed, so that all will be revealed.

So the concept of *tzifiyah* is to see the words of our Rabbis about the past, and to hope for the future. But even more so, it means to hope for something that exists which is just covered over; it is to hope that the covering be removed, so that the inside of reality become revealed. It does not mean to wait for something that doesn’t exist right now.

Hashem is called a *Keil Mistater*, a Hidden G-d, but He exists; He is the absolute *havayah*. He is hidden, He is covered over, but we await that this covering be removed. That is the depth of awaiting the salvation.

In the future, Chazal say that Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath – this does not just mean that the sun’s sheath will be removed. It means that all coverings will be removed. It will be to

⁹ In *Tefillah* #0124 – *Revelation Is Covered, Not Concealed*

go from *galus* (exile) to *geulah* (redemption), and the essence of the *geulah* is *giluy* (revelation) - in which all will be revealed openly. So it's all here now, it just hasn't been revealed yet in the open. What we are awaiting is that all that is here and existing become openly revealed.

Awaiting The Revelation of Hashem

But even more so, the deepest aspect of awaiting the salvation is, as we say here in this blessing of Shemoneh Esrei, **”כי לישועתך קיינו כל היום”** “For in Your salvation we await, every day” – that every day, we await Hashem's salvation. This describes the deepest aspect of our *tikva* (hope).

Tikva is from the word *kav*, a straight line, which is also called *yoshor*, straight, from the word *yashrus* (uprightness). It is written, “G-d made man upright, but they seek many calculations.” Initially, before the sin of Adam, man was *yoshor*/upright. After the sin, our initial state became that of *cheshbonos rabim* – “many calculations” – in that man tends to veer from the straight and righteous path to seek his various agendas. Therefore, the depth of our *tikvah*/hope is to await the return to our original perception, which was the state of *yashrus* – a wish to return to the original *kav hayashrus*, the original straight-mindedness of man.

The superficial use of *tikva* is to await that the Beis HaMikdash be rebuilt and that *Moshiach* should come, and this is a truthful hope, but we need to reveal the depth of *tikva* in our soul – by wishing that we can return to *yashrus*.

Even more so, *tikva* is not just to await the salvation from our *cheshbonos rabim* and to return to *yashrus*. It is mainly about wishing to return to the full recognition of Hashem's existence.

Kavei el Hashem - “Hope in Hashem” - and the Sages explained: “to continuously hope”. What does this mean? Simply, it means that when you don't get what you hope for, keep trying again and again until you get it. But the deeper meaning is as follows. *Kav* can also mean a *chut*, a string. The more *tikva* a person has, the more he weaves together string after string, until it is permanently binding.

Tikva – Hoping For The Revelation of The Existing Reality

So *tikva* is not about hoping for something I don't have. That's not *tikva* – such hoping is imagination! *Tikva* is that I am attached, by a string, to what I am hoping for. If a person hopes for Hashem, he has a bond with Hashem; he is attached by a string. Creation is down below, Hashem is Above – and through *tikva*, we can have a string that binds us with Him.

So to keep hoping in Hashem means to connect myself deeply to what I already have.

When a person hopes to have a house, he doesn't have it. That's not *tikva*; he imagines how much he wants a house, he wants it badly, but that's not *tikva*. *Tikva* is that I am attached deeply

with what I already have, that I am connected to something existing; thus, I hope for its full revelation.

This is the depth of the concept that our Rabbis spoke about that a person can merit a private redemption in his soul even if he doesn't experience the general redemption. There were Gedolim in past generations who testified that they experienced redemption in their own souls.

Chazal say that *Moshiach* is in every generation, and that he sits in the gates of Rome, as is well-known. There is an argument if this is to be taken literally or not. We won't get into that. But the meaning of it is, that *Moshiach* is in every generation – he exists right now! He is merely covered over.

When we hope for the revelation of that and we attribute *Moshiach* as an existing reality, we bond ourselves more and more with the redemption, and this is *tikva*. We are not creating a bond – we are strengthening a bond that is already there. *Tikva* is to keep connecting oneself to the reality of *Moshiach's* existence, who is present here in this generation, and to keep binding ourselves more and more to the redemption with the more we hope and believe in its reality.

This is the depth of one how can merit a personal rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash in his times. “Whoever properly mourns Jerusalem will merit to see its rebuilding.” We can connect in our own soul to the third Beis HaMikdash, to be deeply connected to it in our soul, and this is the string that binds us to it.

Tikva is not to hope in something concealed, which implies that it's not here. It is to await the full revelation of something that is already here, something which is covered from being openly revealed – not something which isn't here.

Awaiting the salvation is to reflect into what we are missing. In *Shulchan Aruch* it is codified that the Three Weeks are the times to reflect more into how we are missing the Beis HaMikdash and *Moshiach*. The main thing we have to realize we are missing is, that we are missing the full revelation of the Creator on the world.

If a person works on the concepts described here, to him, he will not feel that Hashem is a *Keil Mistater*. Yirmiyahu wrote Sefer Eichah, a book full of mourning. How was he able to write it with prophecy, when prophecy only comes with happiness? The answer is, because even as he was mourning, he also had happiness, in awaiting the future revelation, to await the full revelation of Hashem.

The complete kind of *tikva* is two-fold. On one hand, we must realize what we are missing, the great void in our life that we don't have the *Beis HaMikdash*. At the same time, our *tikva* is to hope in something that is already here, just that it's not fully revealed in the open. The reality of Hashem's existence is here, just, it is not openly revealed.

So *tikva* is not just about hoping that the Beis HaMikdash be rebuilt in the future; that is being superficial. The depth of *tikva* is to await that the very present reality of the inner *Beis HaMikdash*

and *Moshiach* in the soul (which is experienced by those who merit it in this generation) that it become fully revealed out into the open.

In Conclusion

As we mourn over the situation of the generation, the fact that Hashem's Presence is so concealed from us – and there was never more concealment as in today's times – at the very same time, we can reveal *tikva* and hope that His Presence become fully revealed.

May we merit to connect to our inner revelation of the Beis HaMikdash in the soul – and that this should not just be experienced by individuals, but in its full revelation which all people will experience in the future.

04 | *A Time of Light and Darkness*¹⁰

The Beis HaMikdash: The Container of the Shechinah

In the future, the fast days will be transformed from sadness and mourning to joy and festivity. But in the time being, where we haven't yet merited this, we are missing the *Shechinah* (Hashem's Presence) from the world, ever since the *Beis HaMikdash* was taken from us.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was called '*oro shel olam*', the "light of the world", and it was also called '*eino shel olam*', the "eye" of the world. The 'eyes' act like a *kli*, a container, that holds light; in the same vein, the *Beis HaMikdash* was the *kli*, the 'container' on this world, that held the light (*ohr*) of the *Shechinah*. Hashem is called a 'consuming fire', thus the *Beis HaMikdash* was needed to contain Hashem's light on this world so that we not be burned up by it.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was thus the container, the *kli*, that contained and held the light of the *Shechinah*. The *Beis HaMikdash* was [physically] destroyed; it meant that the container that held the *Shechinah* on this world was destroyed.

Tikva\Hoping – Connecting To The Inner Dimension

We hope and await for it to be rebuilt, and this is not just a mere hope, but a hope that enables us to personally connect to what the *Beis HaMikdash* was. It is not merely a hope for something that was here and something that will be here.

Hope is called "*tikvah*" in Hebrew language, from the word '*kav*', "a line", resembling a string that connects man to that which is at the end of the line. Through *tikvah*, through hoping, one is essentially standing on the *kav*, on the line, which connects him that which he wants to connect to at the end of the line: the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* and return of the *Shechinah*.

So when we hope for the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*, it is not to be understood as a hope for something which used to be here and is no longer here. *Tikva* is rather *to connect myself to something that exists in the hidden and inner dimension*; our *tikvah* is essentially that that we have a hope to reveal it outward from its hidden state into the external layer of reality, the physical world we see in front of us. But even before it is revealed, *it is there*. It *fully* exists; and it is there *completely*, in the *pnimiyus* – the inner dimension of reality.

We must know that the *Beis HaMikdash* that exists in *pnimiyus* was never destroyed. Only the *Beis HaMikdash* of physical reality was destroyed.

¹⁰ <http://bilvavi.net/english/bein-hamitzarim-005-time-light-darkness>

Through the power of *tikvah* – hoping and awaiting the *Beis HaMikdash* - we can connect ourselves, in the here and now, to the *Beis HaMikdash* that still exists in the inner dimension. Hoping for the *Beis HaMikdash* does not simply help us feel connected to the *Beis HaMikdash* that will come in the future to this physical reality, but to the *Beis HaMikdash* which still exists, which has merely become hidden away.

In simpler and clearer language, it is explained in terms of “higher *Beis HaMikdash*” and “lower *Beis HaMikdash*”. The “higher *Beis HaMikdash*” [in Heaven] still exists, while the “lower *Beis HaMikdash*” [of this world] does not exist right now. The *Beis HaMikdash* still exists - it is just not openly *revealed* right now. The destruction that took place was only with regards to its revealed state; its revealed state was destroyed, but it continues to exist, and it has simply gone into the hidden dimension.

There are famous words of Chazal that “Whoever mourns Jerusalem, will merit to see it in its rebuilding” – which implies that one can see it *already now*, in the present moment, if he mourns it properly. How does a person see the *Beis HaMikdash* in the present, though, if it is not here? It is because the *Beis HaMikdash* is still here in *pnimiyus*. It is only gone in the external and physical dimension of this world.

Our *avodah* with regards to mourning the destruction is thus really two-fold. We have an *avodah* to connect ourselves to the inner *Beis HaMikdash* which still exists, but we also have an *avodah* to hope for the revelation of the external *Beis HaMikdash*.

We cannot hope for its external revelation if we are not connected to its inner dimension, however. This because one cannot hope for something which he is not actually connected with. Our entire hope, then, is that what exists in the inner dimension should become revealed outward.

Therefore, if one is not connected to the inner and existing *Beis HaMikdash*, there is no possibility for him to receive the revelation of the external *Beis HaMikdash*. If a person does not recognize the inner and existing *Beis HaMikdash*, how can he mourn the external *Beis HaMikdash*, when he doesn't know what a *Beis HaMikdash* even is....?

We are already 2,000 years in exile and we haven't seen the *Beis HaMikdash*. “Praiseworthy are the eyes that saw Yerushalayim in its glory” – those who saw the *Beis HaMikdash* were able to mourn it, because they had seen it. But our own physical eyes have never seen it. So how do we mourn over something we only heard about with our ears, but we have never seen it with our eyes?

If one already recognizes what the inner *Beis HaMikdash* is, he truly recognizes what it is, and he has pain that he can't see it; he is capable of crying from the depths of his soul as he mourns it.

A person cannot mourn over something he never saw. The more a person is connected in his soul to the inner *Beis HaMikdash* – to the *Shechinah* that dwells in our heart, which is present in each Jew¹¹ – he is one who can mourn, from the depths of his heart, over the *Beis HaMikdash* which has been taken away from physical reality. But if a person is not connected to the *Shechinah* in his heart,

¹¹ See *Nefesh HaChaim, Gate I*

he does not know what the inner *Beis HaMikdash* is, so he cannot mourn over it. He cannot relate to it at all.

We will try to explain here as much as we can to connect ourselves to the inner *Beis HaMikdash*; to try to conceptualize what it is, even though there are no words that can possibly explain it.

Seeing The “Light of the World” - Within

The *Beis HaMikdash* is called “*oro shel olam*”, light of the world. This exists in the dimensions of time, place, and soul. It was in the place of the world that was Eretz Yisrael, in Yerushalayim, on *Har HaMoriah*. There, the “light of Hashem” shone. The Gemara says that by the *Simchas Beis HaShoievah*, the light reached every home in Yerushalayim; it was a fuller revelation of Hashem’s light.

This was how it looked in the physical place that was the *Beis HaMikdash*. How does it look in terms of our soul?

The physical *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, but the *Beis HaMikdash* in the soul can become built in any person. The *Beis HaMikdash* was a place of *ohr*, of *he’aras panim* with Hashem; so too in our souls, we can have *ohr* in our soul and thereby have an inner *Beis HaMikdash*.

What is this *ohr*? On the first day of Creation, Hashem said, “*Yehi ohr*” – “Let there be light”. The Sages say that entire world was filled with this *ohr*; it was an *ohr* that spanned one end of the world to another. This *ohr* is deep in every soul. Hashem saw that the wicked will not use this *ohr* properly, so He hid it away until the future, reserved for the use of *tzaddikim*. Where was it hidden? There are several approaches in the words of our Sages concerning where this *ohr went* (some explain that it was hidden away into the Torah¹², and others say that it went to other places).

A Time of Darkness

But let us understand: Our period has been described by the words of the prophets as “*And darkness shall cover the earth.*” Anyone whose eyes are a bit open can see that there is a darkness getting stronger each day in the world. It is like the plague of darkness which affected Egypt.

There were two stages in that plague – first there was a regular darkness, and then came a palpable kind of darkness which could be felt with the hands. In this final generation we live in, in the days we are found in, we are in need of redemption no less than how much we needed to be redeemed from Egypt. We are past the first stage of darkness; we are already in the second stage, where the darkness is palpable.

¹² A statement of the Baal Shem Tov

If someone doesn't feel it, he is [spiritually] blind. Our soul must first understand where it is found right now: we are in a period of palpable darkness. The words of our Sages were written about this; and we are now found in it. It is a kind of darkness that we can *feel*.

There is only one difference between today's darkness and the darkness of the plague of Egypt. In Egypt, they could literally see and feel the darkness; they were paralyzed. But in today's times, we cannot feel this darkness with our hands; those who are spiritually sensitive can feel a darkness, but it is not physical darkness; it is darkness of the soul.

If someone feels a bit of what's going on today, if he is even minimally sensitive to the situation, he sees a world of darkness when he looks at the streets today. He feels it as a painful reality. We must know that this is not a parable or an exaggeration. It is a very precise definition of the times today, with all its effects. We are found in a world of *palpable darkness!*

One who has never seen light in his life will think that his life is entirely light, for he has no concept of light and darkness. But if someone has seen or felt even a little bit of light in his life, he feels how he is in a dark world today. The last couple of years, and each continuing day, is a palpable darkness that is getting thicker and thicker. Our soul is experiencing more and more of a feeling of heaviness as we wade further into the thick darkness, no less than how wading into water with clothing makes us feel heavier and heavier as we proceed into it.

Finding The Light

In Egypt, the Jewish people had light in their homes, while the Egyptians suffered in darkness. What kind of light was it? Was it just a physical light? If the Egyptians were experiencing palpable darkness, the Jewish people were experiencing a palpable kind of light. An Egyptian can palpably feel the darkness; a Jew, by contrast, can palpably feel light. [The Jew's soul can feel, palpably, the *ohr* of Hashem].

We must know clearly that the time we are in now is a plague of darkness; it is absolute and total. The Sages say that four-fifths of the Jewish people perished in the plague of darkness. We must understand that for every single day of our life as well, just as in the plague of darkness in Egypt, souls are perishing each day! The cemeteries are getting filled with new graves each day, and so are there souls dying each day. The ones who didn't merit redemption in Egypt will merit to be redeemed in the future redemption, but we must still know that souls are dying each day.

We must have an inner lens towards this, and not merely view this superficially. The superficial outlook is, "There is *yeridas hadoros* (descent of the generations) today. There are so many *taavos* (desires); there is a *yetzer hora* (evil inclination); there are *nisyonos* (difficulties)." This is all true, but the inner perspective towards the situation, which comes from the lens of Torah, is that we are in a plague of darkness!

Anyone with a little bit of open eyes can see that the world is plummeting, that society is breaking apart, and it is happening everywhere, it is even penetrating into the places of Torah. It is total

darkness. But we do have *bechirah* (free will) to choose if we will connect ourselves to the darkness of the world, or to the ‘light’ which the Jewish people had in their homes then.

To Feel Surrounded By Hashem’s Light

Everything said until now was just an introduction of what is trying to be conveyed over here; now we will get more to the point of this.

The *Baal Shem Tov* describes how a holy Jew should look like, how a person looks like when he really lives a Torah life and his existence is attached to the Creator. One of the ways how a person can conceptualize this, the *Baal Shem Tov* writes, is by imagining that one is surrounded by light, and that he is found in the center of the light, so that he can feel the light surrounding him and enveloping him: the light of Hashem.¹³

This sounds like something we should “imagine”. Therefore, most people cannot relate to it, because they feel that it is very hard to “imagine” such a thing....

But we must realize that if we are in a plague of darkness, souls are dying each day, just as in Egypt. Every moment of the day, there is more and more palpable darkness. But because there is so much darkness, Hashem has allowed an equal amount of powerful light to come here. There is light coming down each day as well, and it is a light which is very easy to feel.

In the generation of the *Baal Shem Tov*, they had to work very hard to feel this light. Therefore, it was an arduous *avodah* to feel this light of Hashem surrounding oneself. But in our times, where the darkness is so thick, it has become much easier for us to feel light; because the thicker the darkness is, the more light we can come across. If one can just open up a small window in his soul – a small opening that is true – he can enter, though that small opening, into a place of palpable light.

Hashem hid away the original light of Creation for the future, and it will be revealed fully in the future, but in the End of Days which we are in, where we are at the end of “*Erev Shabbos*”, in *bein hashemashos* (twilight)¹⁴ – there is light and darkness here at once. There is palpable darkness here, which is causing many souls to fall, but there is an equally powerful amount of light here on this world, which can be reached by anyone who penetrates into that place in himself.

We must understand that these words are not a ‘lecture’ and they are not speaking of mere ‘ideas’. We are speaking of something that exists, like a person who comes back from a trip and describes his experiences. The words here are not merely a story being told over, though; they are describing a picture of the situation we are in.

If we want to give some kind of definition to this concept, it can be said that our *avodah* on this world now is to live within the light of Hashem and to let ourselves feel enveloped by it. This was always the *avodah* of *tzaddikim* in the past, thus it was only an *avodah* for rare individuals; and others

¹³ Brought in *sefer Tzettit Kotton*

¹⁴ Ramban, quoting the *Zohar*.

were able to be warmed by this light when they came into contact with the *tzaddikim*. But in today's times, this light is required in order for us to survive spiritually. If a person does not know of this light, it is almost definite that he will fall into the darkness of today.

The light of Hashem fills the entire universe, and one who truly feels it can feel it no less than how a person can feel the heat of a candle when he puts his hand near it. So too, a person can feel the warmth of this light of Hashem - palpably. One who lives enveloped by the light of Hashem is one who lives a true life. Even his body will be physically warmed from it! It is a light that is *palpable*.

When most people hear of this concept the light of Hashem and they try to relate it, they think it means *hashgacha pratis* (Divine Providence); to be aware, intellectually, that Hashem is running our life. In that way, a person can relate to feeling the *he'aras panim* of Hashem. This is definitely true, but it is not the light which we are describing here.

Here we are talking about a light that can fill the entire soul. It is the same light which is mainly revealed in the heart, which can be perceived by the intellect, which can fill one's entire sense of existence, which fills the universe. It is that light which our soul yearns for and needs.

What We Mourn About During The Three Weeks

It is that very light which we mourn for when it is absent from our lives. When the *Beis HaMikdash* stood, a Jew could go there and palpably feel the light of Hashem. He knew that he was facing Hashem and he totally felt this light. That was a true kind of life of a Jew. It was a life of "*nochach p'nei Hashem*", where a person could clearly recognize Hashem's existence; it was always a feeling always in front of the person, and he never forgot about this feeling.

How can a person cry and mourn over a *Beis HaMikdash* which he never saw? It is impossible to mourn over something that we cannot relate to. But when a person already knows of a life of *nochach pnei Hashem*, when he knows of what it means to recognize Hashem, he understands what it means to cry over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash*. He understands what it means when a life of feeling Hashem's presence is taken away from us; he is aware of what was lost from the world.

The Light Is Close Within Reach

A Jewish life that is truthful is not just about keeping the *mitzvos* and learning Torah, which we certainly need to do of course. It is not just about having good *middos*, which enables our Torah to be a Torah of truth. All of those things are necessary tools that *bring* us to living an inner kind of life, to a truthful life, to a life of the soul, where our body is not contradicting the light in our soul and we are aware of Hashem's presence in front of us.

It is the most simple recognition that exists, and it must fill every person's heart. It means that we are never living alone¹⁵. We can live a life in which Hashem's presence fills our being completely. We are not talking about feelings of love and fear of Hashem, which are certainly important and holy feelings. We are talking about what it means to live a life of truth, in which Hashem's presence is always in front of us.

There is palpable darkness today, but there is also palpable light today to counter it. In previous generations, only the *tzaddikim* had access to this great spiritual light. But today, it is very close in reach to any soul who searches for it. It is close to us because its light is so palpable. When one palpably feels it, he can feel it even though it is beyond his actual level. One would have to be very blind *not* to feel this light.

Superficial Life Vs. Inner Life

We have tried to picture here a very inner kind of life which we do not see when we look around us.

A person can live a life in which he does the *mitzvos*, learns Torah, works on his *middos*, and smiles at others – but he lives a superficial kind of life, where he lives on the outside of life, and he doesn't live the inner dimension of life. Inner life is the only true "life" that exists. It is the place in ourselves where we know and recognize the Creator.

But most people are concealed from the depths of their soul, and therefore they are mostly living through the prism of the body. Thus, most people view Torah, *mitzvos*, *tefillah*, *chessed*, and love from a superficial view, from the view of the body, with very little presence of intellect and soul.

Many people think, therefore, that life is simply about balancing our body and soul, and that we just have to work hard at this balance. But the deeper and truer perspective towards life is totally different than this; because you can't work hard on something (such as being in touch with the soul) if you don't recognize it.

Becoming Internal: Listening To Your Innermost Voice

There are two kinds of inner sounds we can hear. The higher level is called *kol*, and a lower level than this is called *bas kol* ("daughter of the voice"). We must at least hear [the *bas kol*], the scent of the *neshamah*. We must try to listen as deep as we can to the depth that is in ourselves.¹⁶ The depth you recognize is the gateway and opening that you can use to go deeper and deeper into your soul.

¹⁵ See *Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus* #019 – *You Are Never Alone*

¹⁶ See *Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus* #010 – *Inner Listening; and Reaching Your Essence* #03 – *Hearing The Soul's Innermost Voice*

All of us have an inner point which is already somewhat revealed to us. Each person is at a different level, but each person can still relate to an inner point in himself, on his own level; it is the deepest part of oneself that he currently recognizes. It is the task of each person to listen deeply to his *neshamah*, to the innermost voice in himself that he recognizes.

Each day, listen to the voice in yourself that wants the truth. (If one doesn't set aside time for this each day, he will still experience the inner voice of truth at times, but it will not be enough to penetrate into the soul.) When one gets used to listening to his inner point, during a time of quiet where he is disconnected from all people and he concentrates all his senses on trying to feel this quiet place in himself, he will slowly find it beginning to expand. Then he will be able to explore it deeper and deeper, as more and more entranceways become opened within him.

This is describing a very actual way to live life; it is not an idea.

Again, it is hard to describe the areas of our soul to anyone who is not in touch with it, who doesn't recognize it already from within himself. But one thing we must all know is that there *is* such a place in ourselves, and that one can keep going deeper and deeper into this place.

One needs to set aside time every day where he listens to himself each day, and if he does so every day, he will get further and further into his inner world, and he will undergo an inner transformation.

What To Think About During The Three Weeks

During these days of the Three Weeks, each person on his own level should become familiar with the innermost place in oneself, the inner voice in you which only listens to truth and doesn't hear any other voices. It is otherwise known as the 'private *Shechinah*' that is in each soul.

This is the deepest part in yourself which you already recognize: it is the point of truth in yourself which you can [consciously] hear each day, and you also hear it suddenly from time to time. Realize that it doesn't fill your life as much as it should. Then, you can feel pain at the fact that it doesn't.

That is the true mourning of the destruction of the 'inner' *Beis HaMikdash* which is equally accessible and within reach of all people. We can all mourn over its loss because we can all relate to the voice of truth in ourselves; we can all feel sad and mourn over the fact that the voice of truth within us is not as dominant in our lives as it should be.

Beyond this level of mourning can come another level of mourning. The level described until now pertains to the self, but the next stage of the mourning involves *ahavas Yisrael* (love for the Jewish people). The more a person has grown internally, the more he recognizes truth; therefore, it should bother a person that other Jews are not living with those very truths he knows about. This is how one can connect himself to the general "pain of the *Shechinah*", which mourns over the absence of G-dliness in the world.

External Inspiration Vs. Inspiration From Within

When it comes the Three Weeks, many aspiring people want to truly mourn and to feel the pain of the *Shechinah*, so they learn the words of the Sages that describe the *Beis HaMikdash*, such as *Maseches Middos*, and the places in the Gemara that discuss what was there and what we are now missing, and through this, people inspire themselves. There is some truth contained to this approach, but it is an external form of inspiration, in which a person awakens himself using sources that come from outside of the soul.

In contrast, the *avodah* described in the words here are about how a person can connect to the meaning of the destruction, from *within his soul*. It connects a person on the soul level to feel the meaning of the destruction and to have true mourning that comes from within. However, it is an approach that can only be understood by a person who lives an inner kind of life.

Mourning and Yearning

During these days (and ideally, during the rest of the year as well), each person should set aside time each day and listen deeply to his innermost voice of the *neshamah*. He should feel pain over the fact that this voice of truth is not recognized by most of *Klal Yisrael*.

But we also await each day for “*the new light [that] shall shine forth on Zion.*” One must try to conceptualize what a world will look like when it is filled with the light of Hashem, where Hashem’s presence is recognized by every person in the world, where His endless light fills the world; and then one should try to live in this light.

When a person does this, and he also begs Hashem to open his mind and heart to know this and feel this, and that he should be able to live within Hashem’s light - he can keep doing this (contemplating it and praying to Hashem for it) until he clearly feels Hashem’s presence in his life and how His endless light fills all of existence.

In Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, these concepts really cannot be described or expressed by any words. But we can all conceptualize and try to imagine a kind of life where a person is living an inner life, where he recognizes and feels Hashem in his heart, where he can palpably feel the light of Hashem.

May we all merit complete *teshuvah* from the depths of our heart and accept His *malchus*, willingly and happily, and that the *Beis HaMikdash* be rebuilt, completely. *Amen, V’Amen.*

05 | *Exile of the Soul*¹⁷

Exile In The World

There is exile in time, such as the Three Weeks. There is also exile in a place, such as how Adam was exiled from *Gan Eden*. There is also exile in our own soul (our *nefesh*): when our own soul is exiled. How does the soul become exiled?¹⁸

The Jewish people have been exiled among the nations, but there is also an exile within the Jewish people: we are exiled among the *Erev Rav* (the Mixed Multitude). The current exile, Edom – which has also recently entered into a new phase, the exile of *Yishmael* – has just now expanded into the exile of the *Erev Rav*. This is a more inner exile than the exile of *Yishmael*, because it is an exile within the Jewish people itself.¹⁹

A Scattered Soul Is A Personal Exile

Yet there is an even deeper kind of exile than our exile to the *Erev Rav*. This is the exile of our very *nefesh* (soul). What is this exile?

The *Maharal*²⁰ writes that just as there is exile in the Jewish people, so is the Torah in exile. The Sages say that the “words of Torah are rich in one place and poor in another place.” The fact that the words of Torah are spread out and scattered all over the place is a form of the Torah in exile. With regards to our own soul as well, when the soul abilities of a person is scattered inside himself, he is in a personal exile.

When a person’s soul is scattered around inside, he is exiled within himself. The soul has many abilities, and they each have their proper place. When they get mixed around, this puts a person into an exile within himself.

This is also the depth behind the suffering of *Gehinnom*. If a person lived his life wrong and he is sent into *Gehinnom*, his real punishment is that he is in a place where he doesn’t belong. He is in exile.

¹⁷ <http://bilvavi.net/english/bein-hamitzarim-016-exile-soul>

¹⁸ This statement of the *Rov* is based on a concept often mentioned in *Sefer Yetzirah* known as “*Olam, Shanah, Nefesh*” – “*World, Time, and Soul*” – That everything takes place in three planes: in a place in the world, in a certain time, and in our own soul. Here, the *Rov* is explaining how the concept of exile takes place in the world, in time, and in the soul.

¹⁹ See *Tefillah* #085 – *Erev Rav Today and Chanukah* #048 – *Greek Influence Today*, and *Derashos* #086 – *Exile of Past and Present*

²⁰ *Maharal: Netzach Yisrael*

That is exile: when we aren't in the *place* we should be. The same is true for our soul. If the abilities in our soul are out of place, that is exile, because the abilities are not where they are supposed to be, and it creates an internal chaos.

The exile of the soul is really the depth of our exile. Chazal say that three sins take a person out of this world: jealousy, desire, and honor. That is exile – when we are taken out of our proper place, due to negative traits of the soul, which “take a person out of the world.”

The *Ramban* says that a person exists where his thoughts are. If, for example, a person is sitting in the *Beis Hamidrash*, but he's spacing out, thinking about what's going on in the world, where is he? He is really outside of the *Beis Midrash*, out there in the world, in a place where he doesn't belong. It is exile.

First Feel Your Own Exile

A person must come to recognize this matter from within himself (as it is written, “*From my flesh I see G-d.*”). If a person doesn't feel his own personal exile that is taking place inside himself, he won't be able to feel the general exile of the Jewish people either. In order to know what exile is, you have to already recognize the concept from within yourself.

There are many areas in the soul. There is the layer of our actions, our *middos* (character traits) and emotions, and our thoughts. If a person realizes how mixed up the parts of his soul are with each other, he will realize how much he is in a personal exile.

If a person realizes that this is his situation and he is able to cry about it, he has the key to feel the exile of the Jewish people, and the fact that the *Shechinah* is in exile and that *Moshiach* hasn't come yet. Although it is “*shelo lishmah*” (ulterior motivations), because he is only crying about himself and not about other, still, the rule is that *shelo lishmah* can bring a person to “*lishmah*.”

The concept of *galus* (exile), on a superficial level, is well-known. But the inner meaning of *galus* is not that well-known. The *Maharal* says that the concepts of exile and redemption are interrelated, for the words “*galus*” (exile) and “*geulah*” (redemption) are rooted in the word, “*giluy*” – to reveal. The depth of this concept is because when a person sees how much we are missing in exile, he sees how much is needed to be ‘revealed’ - and he will then be able to feel the pain of the exile.

If someone still cannot feel how his very soul is in exile, and he doesn't realize that we are supposed to reveal Hashem, and that we are missing this in exile, what can he do to feel the loss of the *Shechinah*?

He is not exempt just because he doesn't feel his own personal exile. He should think into the world's dire situation right now; how much the world is missing now. It is written about Moshe, “*And he went and he saw their suffering.*” So too, one should think about the painful situation of today's times, and that will get himself to feel the loss of the *Shechinah*, the situation of exile.

Basic Empathy

If this is still not enough for a person to awaken himself to feel the pain of this exile, he should at least think about how much people are missing *physically* in their life. For example, think into the following:

1) How many widows and orphans are there on the world? 2) How much suffering and illness is going on in the world? 3) How much financial stress is going on in the world?

How much pain is going on in this world?? Feel the pain of other people on this world; connect with the pain of others whom you meet.²¹ Anyone is capable of doing this – we can all unite together in this way and feel some mutual connection.

This will elevate our own personal suffering from being self-absorbed, into feeling the suffering of others, the suffering of the masses. This will help us feel the pain of exile, and of this the Sages state, “Whoever mourns properly over the destruction of *Yerushalayim*, will merit to see it rebuilt.”

²¹ See also *Tefillah* #0111 – *Empathy*; and *Tefillah* #0158 – *Deeper Kindness and Compassion*

06 | *Misplaced*²²

The Beis HaMikdash: What We Lost

The days we are in now are days where we are obligated to think about what we had when he had a *Beis HaMikdash*, and what we are missing now that the *Beis HaMikdash* is gone. Let us try to understand what we used to have, and then we can realize what we are missing now.

Har HaMoriah, the site of the *Beis HaMikdash*, was the place where *Akeidas Yitzchok* (the binding of Yitzchok Avinu on the altar) took place, where he became sanctified with the status of a *Korbon Olah*. Avraham Avinu was told by Hashem not to do anything to Yitzchok, and then Avraham saw a ram tangled in the bushes; Avraham found the ram and slaughtered the ram in Yitzchok's place. But the Sages reveal that Yitzchok's soul ascended to Heaven as he was bound on the Altar, and it is even explained that he spent several years in Gan Eden. Yitzchok Avinu was thus elevated on the place where the *Beis HaMikdash* would future stand.

Later in time, Yaakov Avinu came across this same place and slept there, for he sensed that it was a holy place; he knew that it was the "house of G-d", the "gateway to Heaven", a place where prayers are accepted. It was the place in the world where Heaven kissed physical earth.

Our External Exile and Our Inner Exile

During the first five days of creation, the heavens and the earth were created. On some days there were Heavenly creations made, and on other days there was the physical formation of this universe, with the planets, the animals, the birds, the plants, the waters, the landscape. On the sixth day of Creation, Hashem made the unique creation of man, who comes from heaven and earth. Man's soul is taken from Heaven, and his body comes from the earth. He is the only creation made from both Heaven and earth.

The soul on this world, ever since a person is born, comes from Heaven its source, but as it stays on earth inside our body, it is not in its rightful place. It is not found with its source. The separation of our soul from Heaven is really the deepest form of exile that exists. There can be no greater form of exile than this.

During these times, we mourn the destructions of both temples, and we contemplate our many exiles – which include Egypt, Babylonia, Persia-Media, Greece, Edom\Rome, Yishmael\the Arab dominion, and the current exile of the "*Erev Rav*". But there is also an inner exile in all of us: We are all created from Heaven, we have been taken from our actual source, from our real place, and we have been placed here, into our physical body on this physical earth.

²² <http://bilvavi.net/english/bein-hamitzarim-019-misplaced>

Our very physical existence on this earth is an exile. Our body comes from earth, and it can be in its rightful place. But our soul, our neshamah, comes from Heaven, and it has come down here to this earth, which means that we are essentially in exile.

However, a person usually does not feel this painful and inner exile. Instead, a person feels his body's needs, and if he uses his mind a bit, he knows he has a soul and perhaps he tries to fill his soul's needs, but he usually does not identify that strongly with his soul in a palpable sense. When one palpably feels that he is a soul, he clearly feels how he is in exile on this world.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* writes that a pious person awaits the day of death. Why does he await it? Just as we await the redemption, the coming of *Mashiach*, the *Beis HaMikdash* and the resurrection of the dead, so does an internal person await the day where he will go from the exile he is placed in on this world. He feels strongly that he is found in a place where he does not belong. When you are in a place where you feel like you don't belong in, you understand that your entire existence here is exile.

This is the inner place in yourself where you can and should feel how you are in exile here. Had Adam never sinned, he would have gone straight into the final *Beis HaMikdash*, and to the meal of the eternal *Shabbos Kodesh*. He would have lived forever in *Shabbos*, which is called *yoma d'nishmasa*, "day of the soul", a completely sublime existence. But when Adam sinned and he fell from that greatness that awaited him, he was cursed with labor, with involvement of the physical body. It was a profound exile placed upon him.

What Did The Beis HaMikdash Give To Us?

Even when the first *Beis HaMikdash* was built, which was more complete than the second *Beis HaMikdash*, it was still not a complete revelation of the light of Hashem. It was after the sin of Adam, so it could not be the complete realization of Creation yet, as perfected as it was. This was in spite of the fact that it was built by the great Shlomo HaMelech. (On the day Shlomo built the *Beis HaMikdash*, the Gemara says that he married the daughter of Pharaoh). So even the *Beis HaMikdash* was not the complete redemption. The complete redemption will only be in the future.

But we must know: What *did* the *Beis HaMikdash* give to us, when it stood?

Exile To Our Body

Firstly, as we said, if a person wants to understand what exile is, he must know what it is in the inner sense, not merely in the external sense.

Of course, if a person lives outside of Eretz Yisrael, he can feel how he is in exile, in the physical sense, for he is in a place that is not his. Over here in Eretz Yisrael, how can he feel that he is in exile? Take a look at the world around you; everyone is a different type. We each come from the 12

shevatim (tribes), who were each allotted different portions in Eretz Yisrael, and we don't know where exactly we come from. So here also, in Eretz Yisrael, none of us can know for sure where our rightful place is. There is probably no one who is living in his right portion in Eretz Yisrael.

This is all but the *physical* layer of the exile. We can start thinking about this simple thought and realize that we are probably not in the place where we belong in. This is just beginning to scratch the surface of exile; we haven't even yet explained how the exile affects our soul. So wherever we live, we are in exile.

If we view ourselves as a body, then we can at least be aware that we are exiled to the place where our body is. If one lives outside Eretz Yisrael, he can feel that his body is not in the right place, and if he lives in Eretz Yisrael, he can also feel that he is not in his rightful place, for he is probably not living in his designated portion of Eretz Yisrael. Most people don't think about this, but if you do think about it, you are beginning to realize that this is all a result of exile: we don't know where we really belong on this world.

Exile To Our Soul

But if a person is deeper, he identifies himself as a *neshamah* (Divine soul). Then he can feel like he has no place at all on this world!

Ever since Adam sinned, our soul has been exile; it did not enter the eternal Shabbos as it would have enjoyed. Instead, it became exiled by the body, and we are not in our rightful place.

The Beis HaMikdash: Where We Connected To Our Real Place

What, then, did the *Beis HaMikdash* provide for us, if we are anyways in exile, ever since the sin of Adam, where our soul was plunged into the confines of the physical body?

It was the 'gateway to Heaven', as Yaakov Avinu named it. The Sages state that the "lower *Beis HaMikdash*" is parallel to the "higher *Beis HaMikdash*". The *Beis HaMikdash* on this earth was the place where 'Heaven kissed earth'. There was palpable holiness in that place, and anyone there could connect his soul to Heaven there. Although it wasn't actually Heaven, it was the gateway to Heaven; it was a place on this world where one could feel connected to his real place.

These are not mere technical definitions. It was the "gateway to Heaven" - a place where every person could feel a lot closer to his real place, his source in Heaven. Compare this to a person traveling to his city. When he gets to the gate of the city, although he's not yet in the actual city, he already feels like he has found his place. He is very close to his real place that he belongs in. When one is close to his real place, his feeling of exile is greatly removed.

As long as a person lives a body-oriented kind of existence, he views exile through the lens of the body. However, even at this level, he can still feel that a place outside of Eretz Yisrael is not his real

place, and even in Eretz Yisrael, he can feel that he is not his actual allotted portion where he belongs in, which gives him some idea of exile.

This perspective is still within the lens of the body, because it is only covering the physical layer of exile. To illustrate what we mean, the root of exiles was Egypt; it was a physical labor as well as a spiritual labor. There was tough labor there, but there was also the “49 Gates of Impurity”, which was exile to the soul.

Thus, when we think about how the exile has affected the place where we live in, it means two things. We have been physically exiled from our rightful place, but even worse, our very *souls* are in exile.

Contemplating Exile

Each person, on his own level, must contemplate what exile means, and what redemption means.

One who identifies himself mainly as a body, and not as a soul, will not be able to relate to the exile of the soul. Therefore, he should at least contemplate the physical aspects of the exile, such as the fact that we are not living in our rightful place; whether we live outside of Eretz Yisrael or in Eretz Yisrael.

If a person does see life through the prism of the soul, though, he can be aware that our main exile is the fact that our souls are in exile. Feeling the exile through the prism of our soul means to feel how our very soul is not in its rightful place.

These words are usually far from most people, because most people are living life through their body, and not through the soul. Rarely does a person even feel the physical aspects of the exile, and surely there are even less people who feel the exile of the soul.

That unrealized reality, in and of itself, is the depth of this painful exile we are in. There is an exile upon our bodies, and there is exile upon our souls! Most of the world is not in touch with their souls, and therefore they think that they are just a body. That’s how many people in the world are living life: through the prism of their body. It has been this way ever since Adam was cursed with hard labor: man thinks initially that he is a body, and he has a hard time understanding that he is mainly a soul and not a body. That, itself, is exile.

The Torah In Exile

Anyone who searches for truth can think of the following (otherwise, he shouldn’t bother making this contemplation): We sit and learn Gemara during the day, which is called the *Talmud “Bavli”* (the Babylonian Talmud). Most of the Torah we learn, then, comes from Babylonia, from a place of exile. Some people learn *Talmud Yerushalmi* (the Jerusalem Talmud), but whenever we have an argument between *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, we follow the *halachah* according to the *Talmud*

Bavli. This is the main Talmud we have: *Talmud Bavli*. All of the Torah we learn comes from the Babylonian exile; it should certainly bother us, then, that our very Torah we are learning comes from Babylonia, from exile.

Surely it must be this way, and it will be this way until Moshiach comes. But it can still bother us that our main Torah that we learn each day comes from Babylonia, from a place of exile. The reason for this is because this is indeed our level: we are in exile. The *Maharal* says that the Torah is in exile with us; just as we were spread all over the world, so are the words of Torah scattered, for some areas of Torah are well-explained and other areas of Torah are lesser known.

Does it bother anyone that he learns Talmud *Bavli*, a Torah that comes from exile and is confined to this exile? When one opens up his Gemara in the morning and he says the prayer of Rav Nechunia ben Hakanah, does it bother him that his now going to learn a Torah that comes from exile...?

It is obviously the will of Hashem that we learn it, of course, but it is only the will of Hashem because we are in exile now, and because we are not in the state of the redemption! A person might be learning Gemara for so many years yet it never bothers him that he learns a Gemara that comes from exile.

In deeper terms, the Torah we learn now is called a Torah of the 'body'. We learn the monetary laws, the laws of Shabbos, the laws of *niddah*, the laws of kosher slaughter, etc. – but all of these are *sugyos* (sections of Torah) that are 'clothed' in 'bodily' terminologies. One who feels his existence as a soul can feel the exile constantly, because he feels that he is in a place that is not his; and even when he learns Torah, he is painfully aware that the Torah he learns is also in exile.

Mourning Over The Beis HaMikdash

When we mourn over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, it should feel like a dead body lies before us. When someone dies, why do we mourn? Isn't the body still here in the grave for us to visit it? Is it because we are in pain over the fact that the body suffers at death from *chibut hakever*? We are in mourning because there is a body here with no soul; it has no life spirit. The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* meant that the life spirit of the world had gone.

When one feels that spirit of life and he knows that he is found in a different place, he feels the exile. But if he feels that he is fine in his body, and he has no yearning for the soul, this is the depth of this exile. The only reason why people don't yearn enough for the *Beis HaMikdash* is because they must be that they are living a life of the body, and they feel fine with the body they live in.

These words here are just a preface, for a person to open up a new perspective, to stop seeing things superficially. We must reflect and wonder if it bothers us that we don't live enough a life of

the soul, and that we are instead mainly involved with our body's needs. And on a deeper level, it should bother us that even our Torah learning is in the realm of the exile.

A person might go by *Tisha B'Av* year after year, and 20 years later, he has still never felt the meaning of exile!

When we open our eyes a little, when we open our mind and heart a bit, and we reflect, we can slowly feel the depth of the exile we are found in. It surrounds us from all sounds – from in front, from behind, above and below, from all directions. We did not speak here about the external aspects of exile; here we spoke about the more inner dimension of exile. Even when one is in a period of spiritual growth, he is still in exile.

Actualizing This Lesson

If one reflects about these words and he has taken them a bit to heart, he should try the following reflection:

Each day when you open up your Gemara [when you are reciting the prayer of Rav Nechunia ben Hakanah, which is to be said before starting to learn each day], on one hand, you should feel happiness and pleasure over the fact that you learn Torah - but at the same time, you should feel a bit of pain over the fact that all of our Torah learning today is on the level of 'exile', for it is a Torah of exile, a Torah that is currently 'clothed' by the physical body.

In Conclusion

May we merit from Hashem to mourn over Yerushalayim, to mourn over it from the depths of our soul, where we recognize what was, where we are now, and what we yearn for. Each person can do this on his own level.

Let us bring ourselves to feel some level of pain which will enable us to cry a bit. From those tears, it can be realized how the "Gate of Tears is never closed", and one who truly cries over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* is one who can feel the gateway to Heaven here on this world. There, one can connect to it from the depths of his soul, and he will surely merit to at least touch upon the light of "One who mourns Jerusalem, will merit to see it in its rebuilding."

May we merit the rebuilding of the *Beis HaHaMikdash*, speedily in our times, and today. *Amen.*

07 | Reason To Mourn – Tisha B'Av 5776²³

There Is New Reason To Mourn Each Year

It is written [in *sefer Eichah*], “On this, our hearts are sick...on the mount of Zion which has become desolate...” The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* causes us to mourn, which is the old mourning that has accompanied us throughout the generations, ever since the time of the destruction. But in addition to what we always have mourned, with the further we are from that period of history when we had a *Beis HaMikdash*, the further we are from the spiritual light that the *Beis HaMikdash* gave us.

Thus, as we grow further and further away from that time, we become even further from the great spiritual benefits that the *Beis HaMikdash* provided, and this creates new reason each year to mourn.

Further Into The Concealment

The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed at the time in history when it was destroyed, but at least that generation was close to the time when it stood, so they were able to still have some access to its spiritual light. But as the generations continue, we are further and further from that light; it becomes more and more concealed from us.

The Sages say that “Any generation in which the *Beis HaMikdash* wasn’t built in, is considered to be a generation in which it was destroyed”. The concept of “destruction” essentially means that the spiritual light of the *Beis HaMikdash* is concealed from us. In every generation where it wasn’t rebuilt, the light of the *Beis HaMikdash* became further from us, and it continues to become more concealed. The Sages also say that as our exile continues, especially as we are draw closer to the end, “Each day is more cursed than the day before it”, and this is because we grow further and further from the spiritual light that existed with the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Two Aspects of Mourning The Beis HaMikdash

Thus, there are two parts to [recognizing the ramifications of] the destruction.

One part of it is to realize what it means that we don’t have the *Beis HaMikdash*. This part is hard for us to relate to, however, because we did not actually see the *Beis HaMikdash*.²⁴

²³ בין המצרים 026 – תשעו

²⁴ Refer to the Rav’s *derashos* of *Bein HaMitzarim* #02, #03 and #04

The second part is, to realize what is meant by the words “Every day is more cursed than the day before it” - the troubles continue to increase, not only in the physical areas of our life, but mainly in our spiritual areas. The situation of the Jewish people continues to descend further into spiritual oblivion. As long as the state of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* continues to remain, Jewish souls are burning.

Lamenting the Spiritual Destruction of The Souls In This Generation

There are individual and private troubles we all face, as well as broader issues that affect our communities as a whole.

Anyone who has a little bit of heart can feel what others are going through and he can feel pained at the problems of today. His heart can cry inside for others. There are souls today who have become so confused and bewildered, from all of the suffering that is increasing. If someone today just opens his eyes to see what is taking place and he has even a little bit of a pure heart, it's impossible for him not to feel the destruction that has taken place, since last year and until now.

The *Tisha B'Av* of this year, 5776, is not the same *Tisha B'Av* of last year, 5775. It is not the same world anymore.

The verse in *Eichah* says, “*On these I weep, my eyes, my eyes, flow with water.*” Our eyes weep over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, which happened long ago, which is far from our perception. But it is easier for us to weep over the current destruction that takes place before our eyes. Anyone can identify it as long as he is not entirely self-absorbed in his private life. Anyone who searches even a little for the truth, whose heart is even minimally alive to the spiritual, can feel the dire situation of the Jewish people today.

How many Jewish families since last year have left a Torah life since last year?? How many souls have gone lost in the twelve months?? How many people have gone lost, both from This World and from the Next World, all at once??

There is no generation that is going lost as much as today's generation, not only in their physical lives, but mainly from their spirituality. Even people who remained “sheltered” since last year from the foreign influences, by now, have now “gone out into the world” – leaving behind their once spiritually sheltered situation.

When we deeply reflect on the situation taking place today, we can feel great pain over it. It can make us truly cry, from a deep place in our souls, when we realize the situation in front of us today. When the pain gets so strong, it spills over from our heart, which can no longer contain it, and then our eyes flow with tears: “*My eyes, my eyes, flow with water.*”

Anyone who can feel a little bit of this pain has both fear for our future, as well as pain over what has happened in the past. There is pain that fills one's entire heart, if he is sensitive to the situation today. Who can live in a place such as today, where everything is deemed ‘kosher’, *rachmana litzlan*?

When you walk in the streets today, you can see flocks of people who have thrown off the yoke of Torah, who, just three days ago, were regular. They look so empty! How much pain their fathers have over them! How much pain their mothers have for them! How much pain their families have over them! Who can endure the depth of all of this awesome pain?? Who can endure the pain this generation has, which is immeasurable and which doesn't end??²⁵

It is illogical for a person who takes a look at the surroundings today and not to feel pained. This pain is a simple feeling for the spiritual. It is not only a feeling for the spiritual, but a simple feeling of pain that comes from the heart which bothers a person, to feel the pain of what others are going through today. Maybe there are a few people today who can't feel the pain of others, because they have so much pain in their lives, which fills their minds; but anyone who is able to come out of himself just a little bit can feel pain for others, to feel a bit of the enormous pain that exists today in *Klal Yisrael*.

The first aspect of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* [being in pain over the fact that we are missing the *Beis HaMikdash*] is far from us to feel, but it is possible to feel it, if we work hard to feel it. But as for the second aspect of the destruction [feeling the painful situation of the generation today] - if a person doesn't see it, he is like a person who is stumbling in the dark. If someone can't feel the pain of the generation today, his heart is blocked.

1: Feeling The Painful Situation of Klal Yisrael Today

The first part of our *avodah* is to feel the pain of the situation today. One should reflect a little with his thoughts into the situation today, and then reflect a little more, and then some more, until he awakens his feelings. As for one whose heart is already open to feeling the pain in the generation today, there is no need for him to reflect deeply; he is already aware.

2: Praying To Hashem For The Rebuilding of Jerusalem

The second part of our *avodah* on *Tisha B'Av* is, after awakening yourself to feel the pain of the generation today, and after moving yourself to earnest tears over it, from that point onward, you can turn to Hashem in prayer, from this new depth in your heart that you have reached, and *daven* to Hashem: "*Rebuild Jerusalem, the Holy City, speedily, in our days.*"

"*Jerusalem Your city, with mercy, return it.*" It will definitely return to us, but we pray that it return with Hashem's mercy! Who will be left by then?? Who will be able to go through all of the suffering until then?? Woe to us if we have to go through another year in This World as it is! The pain today is like an illness, and *chas v'shalom* if it continues, we cannot handle it, because it only gets worse, it doesn't get better with time. Hashem is running the world according to His plan, and not according to our thinking, but from our limited human perspective, by our own natural means,

²⁵ At these words in the *derashah*, the *Rav* broke out in emotional sobs.

we cannot handle another year of continuing pain. We pray in *Shemoneh Esrei* that Jerusalem be rebuilt and that Hashem's Presence be returned to it. The greater one's pain, the stronger and more truthful it is and it comes from the purity of the *neshamah*, from the simple truth, the prayer to rebuild Jerusalem then comes naturally to a person, for the truth demands it. It wants to end all of the pain today, the physical pain and even more so, the spiritual pain. If a person has become purer, he feels the pain of Hashem, so to speak.

The *Shechinah* says: "Woe to the children who have become exiled from the table of their Father." There is awesome pain on High, so to speak, which Hashem has over the situation of His children. There is a verse, "*You are a hidden Almighty*". The presence of Hashem is concealed from us, for the most part, on this world. That is the second part of our *avodah* on *Tisha B'Av* [praying to Hashem to rebuild Jerusalem, earnestly and truthfully, from the depths of the heart], which is a result of the first part of the *avodah*. After working on the first part – feeling the pain of the situation today and really letting it bother you – you will have an easier time with the second part, and be able to pray earnestly to Hashem, from the depths of the heart, from a truthful and pure place in yourself.

It is written, "*Hashem is close to all who call out to Him, to those who call out to Him in truth.*" One needs to *truly, truly* call out to Him. One should pray to Hashem to end the suffering of the Jewish people, both their physical suffering as well as their spiritual suffering, and to be pained over the fact that Hashem, so to speak, is also in pain. If one is truthfully pained from this and he prays to Hashem to end all the pain, he merit "*Hashem is close to all who call out to Him*", because he has called out to Him "in truth".

When we pray to Hashem for this, it needs to stem from this truthful place in our soul. "*From the narrow straits, I called out to Hashem.*" The more you feel trapped by the narrow confines, the more you pray to come out of it. The more a person grasps the simple reality today – not the unknown hidden dimension of reality which is only grasped by a few individuals, but the simple reality in front of us which we can all see – the more his heart can bleed over the situation of the Jewish people today in this world.

In Summary of Parts 1-2 of Our Avodah On Tisha B'Av

It has been explained here two parts to our *avodah* on *Tisha B'Av* – pain which can awaken us to crying, and to then pray to Hashem from the depths of the heart, earnestly, and truthfully.

3: Building Our Own "Mini Sanctuary"

There is also a third part to our *avodah* on *Tisha B'Av*.

If our prayers to Hashem are indeed earnest and truthful and Hashem answers our prayers, and He builds the *Beis HaMikdash* this year, that shows that our pain was truthful and that our *tefillos*

were true. But if, *chas v'shalom*, we don't merit this coming year the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*, then we have a personal *avodah* to do in the meantime.

Although “Anyone who mourns over Jerusalem, merits to see its rebuilding” in the present, if the third *Beis HaMikdash* does not actually come down to us, then we at least we can merit that our truthful, earnest prayers bring us to the desired goal. But if *chas v'shalom* the world continues as it is in its destruction, and there is no complete rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* this year (which will come down from Heaven), we will need more than pain, crying, and prayer. The pain, crying, and prayer are certainly the roots of what we need, but if we don't merit the *Beis HaMikdash* this year, we will need to build more than that.

There is a complete level of *Beis HaMikdash*, and there is also the “*mikdash me'at*”, a “mini sanctuary”. As long as we did not yet merit the *Beis HaMikdash*, we cannot endure for too long the pain in this generation, which is too great. We also cannot endure just through prayer, even if the prayers are true and earnest. Rather, we must do everything in our power to bring back [the light of] the *Beis HaMikdash* [to our own current time]. The third *Beis HaMikdash* will not be built by our own hands, as Chazal say; it will descend from Heaven. But until it descends from Heaven, we have an *avodah* to build our own “*mikdash me'at*” (“mini sanctuary”).

We need at least something that resembles the *Heichal* (the Sanctuary) in some small way. We need some spark of the “new light” that will come to Zion in the future, even now. Amidst all the great destruction, when “there is no more day that is not more cursed than the day before it”, we need a lifestyle that will contain some resemblance to the *Beis HaMikdash*, every day of our life.

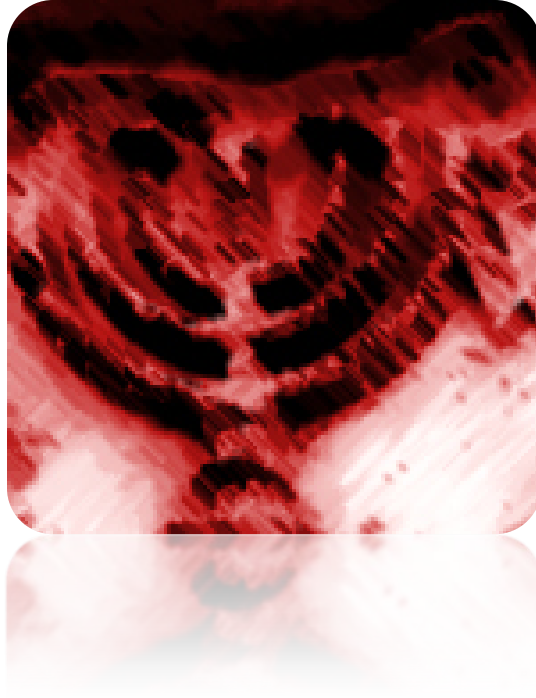
If we look at the world today from the perspective of the Destruction, there is nothing but more destruction taking place in the world, with each passing day. But we can look at it from the perspective of our *avodah* to rebuild the *Beis HaMikdash* – which we cannot do in the active sense of actually rebuilding it, but which we can do in the sense of building a “*mikdash me'at*” (a mini sanctuary). We can have a place of “*mikdash me'at*” in our own lives, as our own personal haven and sanctuary amidst all of the destruction.

Our *avodah* is to keep building this “*mikdash me'at*” all the time. In this way, we can bring the light of the *Beis HaMikdash* into our own time.²⁶

In Conclusion

May we merit, with the help of Hashem, the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*, speedily in our days, when “*a new light shall shine forth in Zion*” – the revelation of the Presence of Hashem, in its complete state. *Amen, Amen, V'Amen.*

26 Editor's Note: The Rav did not specify what “*mikdash me'at*” he is specifically referring to, but he is probably referring to having times each day for reflecting in hisbodedus (seclusion), in order to disconnect from the world.



The 9 Days

07 | *Turning Our Sadness Into Happiness in Av*²⁷

The Month of Av - and Our Avodah of Transforming Sadness Into Joy

We are in the month of Av, the month of mourning and sadness, which will one day be turned into joy, when we merit it from Hashem. Our *avodah* during the month of Av is two-fold. On one hand, we must know what sadness in the soul is, and then our *avodah* is to transform it into joy. Let us try here with the help of Hashem to understand what the source of sadness is, what the source of happiness is, and how we can leave sadness and enter joy.

A Difference Between The Soul of Men and Women

Since this is being delivered to women, we will try here to mainly discuss this subject in terms of the woman's soul.

First we will need the following introduction. Our Sages reveal that when Hashem created the world, He created it with four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. A man's soul is mainly comprised of the elements of water and wind, whereas the soul of woman was mainly based upon the elements of fire and earth.

Of course, in general, every soul, man and woman alike, contains the four elements²⁸. A man certainly has fire and earth in his soul, and a woman certainly has water and wind in her soul. But it is just that the man's soul is mainly based upon water and wind, and a woman's soul is mainly based upon fire and earth. Therefore, whenever a woman feels sad, this is either coming mainly from the fire in her soul, or it is mainly coming from the earth in her soul.²⁹

When Chavah sinned by eating of the *Eitz HaDaas*, she was cursed with, "*With sadness shall you bear children*". Women have to endure the mood swings that result from childbirth and pregnancy. There are also other times in a woman's life where sadness becomes dominant. The element of earth is where the sadness in women stems from, and it was activated when Chavah ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. Again, to emphasize, it is either the element of earth or the element of fire which is the main source of a woman's sadness. The sin of Chavah, which brought about the effects of sadness upon childbearing, was only a means to activate the sadness that was already part of her inner makeup.

²⁷ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/rosh-chodesh-avodah-005-av-turning-our-sadness-happiness>

²⁸ Refer to *Getting To Know Your Soul*

²⁹ In *Understanding Your Middos #002 (Laziness)*, the Rav explains the various causes for sadness which each of the four elements in the soul can cause, when they are left imbalanced. (1) Water-based sadness is a sadness due to running after various physical desires, which eventually breeds on sadness. (2) Wind-based sadness is a sadness which is caused by being too haughty, which causes a person to feel disappointed at his failures. (3) Fire-based sadness is the sadness that results from becoming angry. (4) Earth-based sadness is when a person feels lethargic.

Let us try to understand how we can see sadness coming from either the element of earth or fire.

Sadness Starts With 'Fire' and Awakens Our 'Earth'

To illustrate the concept, we can reflect into the following. The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed by fire, and when we mourn it, we sit on the ground – the 'earth'. Thus, it is 'fire' which plunged us into sadness and mourning, connecting us to the element of earth, similar to how the sin brought about the curse upon mankind, "*You are earth, and to earth you shall return*". We can imply from this that it is 'fire' in the soul which causes us to have a reason to be sad, sending us to the level of the 'earth', where the sadness is clearly manifest. So the sadness begins with the element of fire, and it is revealed in the element of earth.

Soon we will explain how sadness can come from the element of earth, but first let's digest the above concept. Now let us explain, with *siyata d'shmaya*, how exactly the element of fire causes sadness in the soul, and how sadness becomes manifest in our element of earth.

Fire: Destruction and Sadness

Fire destroys. Just like fire destroys physical things, so does the element of fire in our soul, our spiritual fire, tend to be destructive to our own soul. When a person misuses his element of fire, he destroys everything in his path, like a person who feels that nothing is important to him.

You can see this clearly from sad people who complain about everything and are never happy about anything in their life. When a person is sad, he feels that nothing is important to him anymore; nothing can make him happy, because nothing has any value to him. This is how a person uses his spiritual fire to unleash devastation and destruction upon his own soul – just like a very real fire.

We can give a few examples of this. Let's say you have a person who has five children; four of them are doing well, for the most part, and are generally a source of *nachas* to the parents, but one of the five children is a problematic child, causing the parents much heartache and grief. How does the person look at this situation? Either he can focus on the four good children he does have, or, he will become entirely consumed with sadness and frustration over his problematic child.

Some people feel that they have everything good in their family, because they were born with more of an "*ayin tovah*" (a good eye); they naturally adopt a positive outlook on everything. Others weren't born with such a positive nature, and tend to see their lives mostly in a bad light. But if a person is totally negative about his situation in life, then he is never happy. Nothing has any value to him – even if he has a spouse whom he is happy with and he has been blessed with a large family of children and he has other good things in his life. It is all worthless to him, because he is consumed in a particular part of his life which is distressing him.

This is a clear example of when one uses his spiritual fire in his soul to be destructive and it negates everything. Such a person, if he wants to change his outlook, should do some positive

thinking every day. He should say to himself, “Did I get up in the morning today? Yes. Am I alive? Yes. Am I married? Yes. Do I have a children? Yes.” And just start with that.

Writing Down a List of What’s Good In Your Life

Let’s give another example: when a person is amidst a stormy marriage. Although this is a problem, the question is: Is the person totally consumed by his problem? How does he look at his life? Does he consider his life to be worthless just because he has this one problem, or does he feel thankful to Hashem at least that he got up in the morning, that he’s alive, that he’s healthy, and that he has a family?

Many times people forget about what the good they have in their life, and instead focus on the one bad part of their life. People have plenty of good in their life – good health, children, a house, and so many other good things – but because they have one problem, they don’t consider their life to be good in general. This was Haman’s problem. He had almost everything to be happy about, but only one thing didn’t go his way. For this, he said, “*All of it is not worth anything to me.*” Many people feel that way too!

We need to balance out our feelings by not letting our inner ‘fire’ is not getting out of hand and destroying all the good that is in our life.

If a person were to write down a list of everything good and bad in his life, usually, the list of the bad things will come out bigger. This is because people are too focused on the one bad thing in their life, and thus they don’t consider their lives to be good. If only they could just get themselves to focus on the good parts of their life and keep reflecting into it.

Some Positive Reflections To Think About Each Day

There are a few things which we can reflect about that can immediately make us happy, no matter what our situation is.

One good thing we can think about it is the fact that we are Jewish. Every day we make a *beracha* (blessing) of “*shelo asani goy*” (That you did not make me a gentile); we thank Hashem for not making us a non-Jew. This is not just something we say – it can bring us great happiness, if we really think about it.

We possess a *neshamah*, a Divine soul, and we come from our great forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Imagine if you had been born as a gentile, and you wouldn’t be part of the Jewish nation. You would be missing out on everything! If you just think about this and reflect into it, it can cause you to feel sheer joy.

Another thing you can think about is: all of us stood at *Har Sinai* and received the Torah. Can you imagine what your life would be like if not for this? Think about this one thing, and you will have plenty to be happy about.

Another good thing to think about is that all of the Jewish people have a share in *Olam HaBa* (the World To Come), except for a few wicked sinners who do not have a share. Do we ever think about this? The thought of this alone can make us happy.

When This Doesn't Work

Some people, when they think about this, don't really care about the fact that we all come from the Avos, that we all have *Olam Haba*, and that we all stood at Har Sinai. A person might say, "Very nice, but that doesn't help me. Right now, I have problems. I have *shalom bayis* problems. I have problematic children.

I'm not seeing enough *nachas* from my children. My financial situation is very difficult for me. My life is full of problems. It is certainly nice that I come from the Avos, and it's nice to hear that I stood at *Har Sinai* and that I will get *Olam HaBa*, but right now, I am on this world, and it's filled with nothing but hardships for me."

But we have to remember that we are made up of a body (*guf*) and a soul (*neshamah*). We can use our soul's perspective to calm our angry perspective that's coming from our body, by reminding ourselves that we have all these great reasons to be happy: we have *Olam HaBa*, we have the Torah, we were made apart from the nations when we stood at Har Sinai, and we come from the Avos.

If we only look at life through the prism of our body, then yes, we will be consumed with our physical problems, and we will become paralyzed by our element of earth, which slows us down and makes us depressed.

But if we look at life through our soul, we are able to think about the fact that we come from the Avos – which is meaningful to our soul, because that means we have spirituality. The more we see our life through our soul and are focused on spirituality, the more of a balance we achieve between our body and soul, and we calm down inside ourselves.

Self-Help Books Don't Help Us

There are many gentile methods to get rid of depression which people turn to, out of desperation. When a Jew is sad and he seeks relief, he is tempted to read self-help books, written by various gentile psychologists or professors. But a gentile cannot help a Jew become happy. This is because a gentile lives only for This World, and therefore, a gentile's perspective is to seek how life on this world can be the most gratifying life on this world. A gentile is interested in how he can get the most out of This World, which is the world of the physical body. The secular methods of the world when it comes to treating depression cannot help us, because we have a Divine soul within us, and the soul in us needs something else which the non-Jewish books can't tell us.

We, the Jewish people, have special souls within us, and we have our own methods to reach happiness. There are actually many different ways we have, and each person needs to find the proper way that is for him. The way a Jew attains happiness is essentially by leaving his body's viewpoint, and entering into his soul's viewpoint. Then he sees life through the prism of the soul, not through

the body, and then he can be happy. As a person begins to enter the inner world of spirituality, he will find that his pull towards sadness and depression is lessening.

It takes a lot of inner work to arrive at true happiness. We cannot explain here in this short amount of time all the ways how we can reach happiness; it would take several hours. But we have said here what the key is. The key to happiness, the very first step to take, is to begin living a more internal kind of life, where we are seeing life through the prism of the soul, as opposed to living a life of superficiality and the body. Everyone should try to discover how he can enter this inner world; there are many ways (as explained in the previous months).

May we merit to transform our mourning and sadness in the month of Av, into happiness.

Questions And Answers With The Rav

Q1: *Why is fire associated with sadness? Also, isn't fire usually associated with enthusiasm?*

ANSWER: Very good question. Each of the elements has positive and negative uses. There is good and evil uses of earth, good and evil uses of water, good and evil uses of wind, and good and evil uses of fire.

Enthusiasm is certainly a nature rooted in the element of fire. When a person doesn't use his fire for enthusiasm, what happens? His fire is not being activated for good uses, so it will be destructive instead, and the person will view everything in his life as negative. Some people even use fire for enthusiasm in a bad way, like when they act very giddy always, and they aren't so focused in their life; they act childish and irresponsible. They are enthusiastic one day and forget about their enthusiasm a few days later. The way to use enthusiasm in a good way is to build upon it, not to use your fire to destroy your previous successes, but to keep the fire going and building upon your enthusiasm.

Q2: *If women are more prone to sadness, since we come from fire and earth (which are the elements that mainly cause sadness), is there a way for us to have more access to water and wind?*

ANSWER: Certainly. But we need to know how to use the other elements, and it is a very long discussion which we don't have time for now. Generally speaking, the element of earth is the root of the traits of sadness and laziness. If a person is mainly drawn towards laziness, the general solution is to try to stick to doing a certain pastime every day which you never veer from. If a person is mainly drawn towards sadness, the solution is generally to find certain positive aspects about yourself and your life which you can receive pleasure from on a continuous basis.

08 | *Av – Hearing Hashem*³⁰

The Month of Av and The Sense of ‘Hearing’

The month of Av, as we know, is the root of all tragedy and suffering in our history.

There are twelve months of the year, and each month contains a special power. The power contained in the month of Av, our Sages explain, is the power of *shemiyah* (hearing).

The Spies’ Evil Report Was ‘Heard’ In The Month of Av

The Vilna *Gaon* explains that in the month of Av, the *bnei Yisrael* heard the accounting of the Spies about the land of Israel, where the Spies spoke disparage about the land. Instead of listening to Yehoshua and Calev’s report, who spoke in praise of the land, the *bnei Yisrael* instead chose to listen to the other eight Spies, who spoke negatively about the land.

There is a power to use our ability of hearing for good, and there is a way how our hearing is used for evil. Our Sages explain that our ears contain an extra piece of skin underneath them, so that we can we block out our eyes from hearing something evil³¹.

During the month of Av, the power of hearing was used for evil, when the *bnei Yisrael* listened to the Spies’ report about the land, and they came to cry ‘tears in vain’. Because they cried ‘tears in vain’, Hashem declared that day, the ninth day of Av, as “a day of crying throughout the generations”.

When we stood at Har Sinai, we used our power of hearing for good, where we heard the voice of Hashem. This was where our power of hearing was used in the most elevated way possible. But in the month of Av, where we cried futile tears, the ears that heard at *Har Sinai* were damaged. At Har Sinai, we were freed from all forces of impurity and evil, and we returned to the level of perfection. When we heard the Spies’ report and we cried, the month of Av became a month of mourning for all generations to come; it was like a form of death that came to mankind.

There is personal mourning in each person’s life, and there is mourning on the collective level of the Jewish people, which is when we mourn over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Let us try to understand, with the help of Hashem, what good listening is, and what evil listening is. Let us see how we can use the power of hearing for holiness - which will merit us to hear the sound of *Moshiach’s shofar*.

³⁰ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/essence-month-006-av-hearing-hashem>

³¹ *Kesubos 5b*

Hearing and Understanding (Da'as)

Firstly, we need to know what the sense of hearing is about. The Sages state that there are four senses (contained in the parts of the face): sight, hearing, smell, and speech. What is the essence of the power to 'hear'? We can know what it is by analyzing its opposite. The opposite of a listener is a deaf person (in Hebrew, "*cheiresh*").

The *Gemara* defines a *cheirish*/deaf person as one who is born with the inability to hear and talk. If he can talk, he is not considered to be "deaf" according to the Torah. The *Gemara* also says that a *cheiresh* has no *da'as* (sensible understanding), just like a minor or mentally ill person has no *da'as*. Elsewhere, the *Gemara* says that he has 'weak' *da'as*. But either way, there is something missing from his *da'as*.

Thus, one who can hear, one who has "a heart that listens", is one who has *da'as*. There is an expression in the *Gemara*, "You do not listen to me, you do not understand me." Being a listener doesn't just mean to use your physical ears to listen to the other person. It means to listen with your heart; to have a "*lev shomea*", a heart that listens, or a "*lev meivin*", a heart that understands.

Thus, hearing implies the ability to both hear and talk, and it also includes the ability to have *da'as* (sensible understanding). What is the explanation of this matter?

The Ability To Hear The 'Word of Hashem'

If we want to understand the essence of any matter, we need to examine where it appears the first time in the Torah. The first time the Torah speaks about the idea of hearing is by Adam *HaRishon*, when he heard the voice of Hashem calling to him in *Gan Eden*.

From where does a person get his power to talk from? It is because Hashem breathes into a person His word; the "*dvar Hashem*" (word of Hashem). Our entire speech gets its vitality from the "*dvar Hashem*" that empower it. The entire Creation is supported and sustained by the *dvar Hashem*.

This is also why the Sages say that we are commanded to always speak words of Torah, and to avoid speaking words of idle chatter. It is because we have to use our power of speech to emulate the *dvar Hashem*, and such speech contains true vitality that comes from Hashem. By contrast, when someone speaks meaningless words, and surely when he utters forbidden speech such as gossip and other forbidden forms of speech, he is speaking words that are empty from vitality.

Man is called "*nefesh chayah*" (a living soul), and *Targum* says that this means man is a "*ruach memalelah*" (a talking spirit), thus our entire ability to talk is due to the word of Hashem that was breathed into us.

When Hashem created the universe, He created it with ten expressions, but there was no man yet to hear it. Man was created last, and he didn't hear the *dvar Hashem* that said "Let there be light" and "Let there be a firmament." Until we received the Torah at Har Sinai, no one ever heard the actual *dvar Hashem*. For twenty-six generations, no one heard Hashem's voice. Although our *Avos*

kept the entire Torah, and there was Torah learning in the yeshivah of Shem and Ever and in the yeshivah in Goshen, there was not yet a revelation of the *dvar Hashem* which a person could hear. Only at *Har Sinai* did we hear the voice of Hashem.

This is also the depth of the declaration of “*Naaseh V’Nishma*” (We will do, and we will hear), when we stood at Har Sinai. It was because we received a new kind of hearing, a new set of ears: the ability to hear Hashem’s voice. The ears we had before we stood at *Har Sinai* were not the same ears we had after Sinai. The ears we received at *Har Sinai* enables us to hear the *dvar Hashem*, to hear the Ten Commandments of the Torah, which commands us to speak the words of Torah. Ever since then, a person is able to remember *Har Sinai* – he is able to connect to the word of Hashem, which he heard at Har Sinai. The *Gemara* defines a deaf person as one who is born as both deaf and mute; he cannot talk because there are no words which he has ever heard, to talk about. This is true about the physically deaf person - but there is also spiritual deafness (as we will soon explain).

When a person hears a spiritual message, he is connecting to the “*dvar Hashem*” that was heard at Sinai. Every single Jew received that ability. The giving of the Torah was essentially a conversion process to Judaism, and it is also called a birth. The Sages said that a deaf person is one who is born deaf and mute, but if he can hear from birth, he is not called a deaf person according to *Halacha*.

The birth of the Jewish people, which was at *Har Sinai*, meant that we were all on the level of hearing from birth. So we were all ‘born’ with the ability to hear the *dvar Hashem*, and ever since then, we have the ability to speak words of truth: the words of Torah, which is the word of Hashem.

The giving of the Torah at Sinai enabled us to receive a new kind of listening and speaking, in contrast to the person who is born deaf and mute, who cannot hear nor speak. This ability was only given to the Jewish people, for only the Jewish people stood at Sinai. It is forbidden to teach Torah to a gentile, nor may a gentile learn it; he is liable to capital punishment if he does so. This is because a gentile doesn’t view Torah as the *dvar Hashem*; he only learns it for the sake of knowing its information.

But the Jewish people’s view towards the Torah is to learn it with the understanding that it is the *dvar Hashem*.

This is what it means to truly “hear”. A *lev shomeia*, a “heart that listens”, is a power exclusive to the Jew’s soul, who stood at Har Sinai. It is spiritual hearing; to hear the voice of Hashem – to hear the *dvar Hashem* in each thing.

Now we can understand what evil hearing is. When a person doesn’t hear the *dvar Hashem* in something, he has misused the power of hearing.

Hearing Hashem

Our *Gedolim* would often view the people who told them news as messengers of Hashem to let them hear what they needed to hear. They would hear Hashem talking to them within the

information. But even a person who is not a *Gadol* can hear the messages of Hashem through the things he hears, for it is said that every Jew can hear the Heavenly “*bas kol*”.³²

The Destruction of The Beis HaMikdash: What We Lost

Yirmiyahu *HaNavi* warned *Klal Yisrael* that if they don't repent, Hashem will come and collect His debt. He said, “*Hear, O heavens, and listen, earth.*” When *Klal Yisrael* didn't listen to the *Navi*, it was not only because they didn't repent, but because they lost the ability to listen with their hearts. By refusing to listen to the *Navi*, they lost their listening heart.

The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was because *Klal Yisrael* wasn't listening to what they needed to hear. Hashem speaks to a person all the time, but if someone doesn't hear His voice, he does as he pleases and thus he never repents.

Yerushalayim, and specifically the *Beis HaMikdash*, was the place where the voice of Hashem would go out from to the rest of the world. “*For from Zion goes out Torah, and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem.*” The voice of Hashem was heard at the giving of the Torah, and then it was no longer openly heard. But it continues to be heard in the Torah, in the “word of Hashem” - and it was heard in the *Beis HaMikdash*. The *Beis HaMikdash* was a place where a person could always hear the word of Hashem. Whereas the giving of the Torah was only a temporary time to hear the word of Hashem, the *Beis HaMikdash* was a place where it was heard constantly.

Thus, when we lost the *Beis HaMikdash*, we lost that ability to always hear Hashem's word.

The Loss of the Shirah (Song)

Let us try to understand more what the deep power of “hearing” is.

The *Gemara* says that two voices cannot be heard at once. However, the *Raavad* writes that we can hear two tunes at once. This is because *nigun* (tune) is a higher kind of sound than hearing words. A person can also hear the *taamim* (sounds) and *nigun* (tune) contained in the Torah, the *shirah* (song) of the Torah, as he hears the words of Torah. In the *Beis HaMikdash*, the Kohanim would do the *Avodah*, and the Leviim sang the *shirah*; this was together with the “*dvar Hashem*” that went out from there.

We still have the Torah, even after the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed. What is missing now from the Torah, then? What Torah did we lose with the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*? We lost its inner song, its *niggun*, its *shirah*.

³² A statement of the *Baal Shem Tov*. See *Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus* #010 – *Inner Listening, and Reaching Your Essence* #003

This is the depth of why the Sages wanted to forbid *shirah* after the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed. The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred); the *shirah* is the opposite of the concept of *sinas chinam*. Whereas *sinas chinam* causes disparity, *shirah* comes to unify. It unified sound with word and enables us to hear two sounds at once.

In addition to the reason of *sinas chinam*, the *Beis HaMikdash* was also destroyed because of *lashon hora* (evil gossip). *Lashon hora* is also a kind of speech that causes disparity. *Lashon hora* is at its name implies – it is ‘*lashon ra*’, evil speech, because it is not true speech. It is far removed from the concept of *shirah*. One who speaks *lashon hora* about his friend is not unified with him and separates himself from him. He is missing the *shirah* of the Torah.

It is forbidden to hear *shirah* during the Nine Days, and the depth of this is because we lost the *shirah* of the Torah. We are missing the true *shirah*, and thus it is forbidden for us to take our minds off this loss; that is why we cannot listen to music during these days.

A *cheirish* (one who is born both deaf and mute) has no *da’as*, and the depth of this is because he cannot connect to others. He doesn’t hear and he doesn’t talk to others, so he cannot connect with others. Thus he has no *da’as*. If he can hear others or if he can talk to others, he is not considered by Chazal to be “deaf” according to *Halacha*, because he can at least connect to others.

Our Avodah: Hearing The Word of Hashem In Everything We Hear

Now we can better understand what our *avodah* is during these days.

The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was rooted in the fact that *Klal Yisrael* heard the Spies’ evil report. In addition, *Klal Yisrael* didn’t listen to the prophets who warned them of the impending destruction. The *avodah* of these days is thus to access and regain the power of *shemiyah*, inner listening.

Our ears heard the word of Hashem when we stood at Har Sinai, and this ingrained in us the power to hear the word of Hashem in each thing. One can hear the *dvar Hashem* in each thing he hears. In this way, everything that a person hears can bring him to the state of oneness with Hashem.

When one doesn’t hear the word of Hashem in each thing, and instead he simply hears the events of the world without connecting it to the *dvar Hashem*, he is listening to this “world of disparity” (as it is called by our Sages), instead of listening to the *dvar Hashem*. He hears the sounds of This World, not Hashem. This will also cause his own words that he speaks to be disconnected from the *dvar Hashem*.

But if one hears the *dvar Hashem* in each thing that he hears, he hears His one voice in everything. He only hears “one” voice alone. When he hears that “one” voice, he will find that his speech only can speak of only “one” thing....

In Conclusion

May we merit from Hashem that the impurity and blockages be removed from our ears, that instead of hearing the nonsense of this world, we should instead hear the word of Hashem. When we are hearing the word of Hashem, we can then speak of one thing alone, a kind of speech will unify all of *Klal Yisrael* together and turn us into one unit again. And through this we will merit, with the help of Hashem – may it come speedily in our days - the rebuilding of the complete *Beis HaMikdash* and the coming of *Moshiach*. Amen.

09 | *The Lion of Chodesh Av*

The Destruction of Jerusalem: When The ‘Lion’ Attacked

The *mazal* of the month of Av is “*aryeh*”, the lion.

In this month, the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, by the Babylonian king, Nevuchednezzar. Our Sages compared king Nevuchadnezzar to a lion, for only a ‘lion’ could have the power to attack the *Beis HaMikdash*, which is called *Ariel*, “lion of G-d.”

It is clear that the *mazal* of the month of Av is tied to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Let us try to understand a little about what the ‘lion’ is in deeper terms, so that we can understand more about the month of Av, and the *avodah* we have during these days; may it be transformed from mourning to joy.

The Lion: The Symbol of Malchus/Royalty

Our Sages state that each of the animal groups has their respective king. The king of the birds is the eagle, the king of domestic animals is the bull, and the king of the beasts is the lion. The lion represents *malchus* (royalty). Although it is king over the beasts alone, it is considered to be the representation of the concept of *malchus*.

The Jewish people are referred to by seven names, and one of them is “*aryeh*”, “lion”. But more specifically, it is the tribe of Yehuda, the king of all the tribes of Israel and ancestor of the Davidic dynasty, who is compared to the lion.

The *Beis HaMikdash* is partially built in Yehuda’s portion, and the rest of the *Beis HaMikdash* is in Binyamin’s portion. Binyamin attained part of the status of the *malchus* due to the first king appointed in *Klal Yisrael*, who was King Shaul, a descendant of Binyamin. However, Shaul’s status of *malchus* was eventually transferred to David, who descends from Yehuda. The *Beis HaMikdash*, which was called *ariel* (lion of G-d), was a manifestation of *malchus* - represented by the “lion”.

The Evil Lion, Nevuchadnezzar

The *Gemara*³³ says that a lion does not attack two people; it will only attack one single person at a time. The *Gemara* asks: don’t we see that a lion does attack two people at once? The *Gemara* answers that it depends. If the lion thinks that there are two people in front of it, it will not attack them

³³ *Pesachim 49a*

both. But if it thinks that the two people look like two animals, then it will attack them both, because then it doesn't think of them as people; it thinks of them as animals.

The deeper meaning of this is that when a person sinks to the level of an animal, he can be attacked by the 'lion' [on the side of evil]. "*They became comparable to animals*", the prophet says, concerning the sinful level that the Jewish people sank to, in the era preceding the destruction. When we weren't sinning, we are called "*adam*" (man); we resemble the perfected level of 'man' that we are created to be. But when we sank to the level of sins, we were on the level of animals – and then we were able to be attacked by the 'lion': Nevuchadnezzar.

If the *Beis HaMikdash* could be destroyed in the month of Av – the representation of the entire Jewish people together – then it must be because we sank to the level in which we were comparable to animals. Had we been on the level of "man", then the 'lion' that is Nevuchadnezzar could not attack us, for the lion doesn't start up with even more than one man. If Nevuchadnezzar was able to come and destroy the *Beis HaMikdash*, this could only have been possible because we became like 'animals' in his eyes, and when he viewed us as animals, he was thus able to attack us. We lost our original *tzuras adam* (ideal form of man).

The Two 'Lions': Yehuda and Dan

In the blessing of Yaakov Avinu, Yehuda is compared to a lion. Yehuda is blessed with the *malchus* (the royal dynasty), the attribute of the lion. Generally speaking, the lion is represented by the tribe Yehuda. But we also find that the tribe Dan is compared to the lion. Yaakov Avinu compares Dan to a serpent, but Moshe Rabbeinu in his blessing compares Dan to a lion.

The *Gemara* says that the lion has six names³⁴. However, there are essentially two roots of where it all stems from: there is a 'lion' aspect contained in Yehuda, and there is a 'lion' aspect contained in Dan.

The lion that is 'Yehuda' represents the concept of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda's role. Yehuda is the symbol of royalty, for the Davidic dynasty stems from him. The lion that is 'Dan', though, refers to the fact that the tribe of Dan is the protectors of the Jewish people, who would guard the borders of Eretz Yisrael from enemy attack; as the tribe Dan is portrayed in the blessing of Yaakov Avinu (as explained according to *Rashi*). This is Dan's aspect of 'lion'. Thus, there is a 'lion' that refers to royalty (Yehuda) and there is a lion that refers to fighting evil (Dan).

The Sages state, "A king can break fences, and no one can protest him." This is referring to the power of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda's aspect. A true king is all-powerful and he can do as he pleases. We also find this concept in the side of evil. The Sages state that the Serpent is one who "breaks the fences of the world." The Serpent, who represents evil, has the audacity to break the proper rules of the world and trample upon all that is holy.

³⁴ *aryeh, kfir, lehavi, layish, shachal, shachaf*

Dan is called the “serpent”, but he is the called the ‘serpent’ on the side of holiness, who can watch and protect the boundaries and fences of the Jewish people. Dan is the opposite of the concept of Yehuda, who is a king who can break all fences. Whereas Yehuda can break through all fences, because he is the king, Dan serves to protect the fences and boundaries within the Jewish people.

‘Higher’ Lion and ‘Lower’ Lion

The *Beis HaMikdash* is called *ariel*, “lion of G-d”. It is clear that the ‘lion’ which the *Beis HaMikdash* is compared to is the lion of Yehuda, an invincible ‘lion’, for he represents the *malchus* of Hashem. The evil ‘lion’, Nevuchadnezzar, came and destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*. How are we to understand this? If the lion of Yehuda cannot be attacked, for he is the king, then how could Nevuchadnezzar attack the *Beis HaMikdash*?

The answer is because Nevuchadnezzar’s ‘lion’ aspect does not draw its power from Yehuda’s ‘lion’ aspect. Rather, Nevuchadnezzar gets his ‘lion’ aspect from Dan. And the ‘lion’ aspect of Dan can be overcome by evil forces.

Yehuda’s ‘lion’ aspect cannot be defeated by Nevuchadnezzar, because the *malchus* of Yehuda cannot be overcome by the *malchus* of Nevuchadnezzar. The ‘lion’ on the side of evil, Nevuchadnezzar, can only attack the ‘lower lion’, Dan. Nevuchadnezzar can’t touch the ‘higher lion’, Yehuda.

Dan is compared to the lion and he is also compared to the serpent. When the Jewish people sank to the level of sinning, they awakened the evil hold of the Serpent, who was responsible for causing man to sin and all subsequent sins after that. Upon sinking to the level of sin, destruction was able to enter. Dan is compared to both the serpent and the lion; on the side of holiness, when we overcome the hold of the ‘Serpent’, the ‘lion’ on the side of evil isn’t able to attack us either.

From the tribe of Dan came the idol of Michah. Because of the tribe of Dan, evil was able to penetrate into the sheltered society of the Jewish people. The tribe of Dan dwelled on the outermost part of the encampment of the Jewish people, thus they were the most susceptible to the forces of impurity that was just outside of them; and therefore it was they who brought in the evil influences of idol worship.

Nevuchadnezzar, the ‘lion’ on the side of evil, was able to attack our *Beis HaMikdash*, which is called *ariel*, “lion of G-d”, only because of Dan. Nevuchadnezzar’s ‘lion’ aspect is really is no match for Yehuda’s ‘lion’. Nevuchadnezzar is only the ‘lower’ lion (rooted in Dan), thus it can only attack our ‘lower lion’; it cannot attack our ‘higher lion’.

The *Gemara* says that Nevuchadnezzar rode on a male lion, and placed a serpent hanging from his head. This is in line with the concept being described here that his “lion-like” power is really using the power of the ‘serpent’: Dan. The side of evil connects the ‘lion’ to the ‘serpent’; it is not capable of taking hold of the lion of Yehuda, but it can connect itself to the lion of Dan.

Dan is compared to the serpent, and he is also compared to a lion; therefore, the side of evil can connect itself to the serpent, and from there, it can connect itself to the level of the lion, for Dan is the connecting point between the serpent and the lion. This is what allowed Nevuchadnezzar to be the 'lion' that destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*: he connected his 'lion' aspect to the 'serpent' aspect of Dan. And when the aspects of 'lion' and 'serpent' are combined for evil purposes, this is what enables the side of evil to attack and destroy the [external layer of the] *Beis HaMikdash*.

We have seen how the side of evil connects the lion and the serpent, for destructive uses. Now we will see how this concept is employed in the side of holiness.

Moshiach: The Holy Union of Yehuda and Dan

Moshiach ben David descends from Yehuda. Rashi explains that "his father will come from Yehuda, and his mother will come from Dan". This shows us that *Moshiach* will be the connecting point between Yehuda and Dan – on the side of holiness. As we know, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which *Moshiach* ben David will build, will be forever. Let us examine the deep reason for this.

On Purim, we were saved by Mordechai, whose father comes from Yehuda, and whose mother comes from Binyamin. The connection between Yehuda and Binyamin symbolizes the first two *Batei Mikdash*, which was split between the portions of land of Yehuda and Binyamin. The deeper meaning behind this is because the *malchus* was eventually split between Yehuda and Binyamin. That rift essentially meant that there were two kings now. And there can only be one king in order for the king to have true power.

Thus, the very fact that the *malchus* was split between Yehuda and Binyamin was already a damage to the *malchus*. Because the *malchus* was damaged during the first two *Batei Mikdash*, it would follow that these two *Batei Mikdash* would ultimately be destroyed. This is because there can only be one *malchus* [under the same roof] - not two.

By contrast, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will be built by *Moshiach*, will be forever. *Moshiach* will come from Yehuda and Dan. If *Moshiach* were to come from Dan alone, he would be on the level of the 'lower' lion, and then he could be attacked by the other 'lower' lion that is on the side of evil. But *Moshiach's* father is from Yehuda - the 'higher' lion - which is stronger than the 'lower' lion; thus it cannot be attacked.

Nevuchadnezzar can only attack the 'lower' lion in *Klal Yisrael*, but not the 'higher' lion in *Klal Yisrael*. Thus, the *Moshiach*, who will come from Yehuda, will be invincible, and his *Beis HaMikdash* cannot be destroyed.

The Sages say that had Moshe entered Eretz Yisrael and built the *Beis HaMikdash*, it could never have been destroyed. We also find that the *Mishkan*, which was built by Moshe, was not either destroyed; it was merely hidden. The *Mishkan*, which is never destroyed, is the root of the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which is never destroyed.

By contrast, the first two *Batei Mikdash* were split between Yehuda and Binyamin, and thus they were susceptible to be destroyed, due to the disparity amongst the *malchus*. Yehuda and Binyamin really cannot be connected, because two kings cannot rule under the same roof. Thus the two *Batei Mikdash* which they jointly possessed could be attacked by Nevuchadnezzar.

The Third Beis HaMikdash: The Union of Yehudah and Dan

It has been explained here that there is a ‘lion’ of Yehuda, and a ‘lion’ of Dan. These concepts need understanding, however. In addition, we also need to understand what exactly their union is.

Since Yehuda and Dan are both called “lion”, their union would mean that there are now two “lions”. If there are two lions, there is no chance against them. Thus, the third *Beis HaMikdash* will never be destroyed, for it is built by *Moshiach*, who comes from Yehuda and Dan, the two ‘lions’.

Gevurah (Strength) and Malchus (Royalty)

Until now, we have outlined the concepts. Now let us try to relate to these matters on a more practical level in our life. What is the ‘lion’ of Yehuda, and what is the ‘lion’ of Dan, in terms of our own personal *avodah*?

We find that the Jewish people, in general, are compared to the lion. The beginning of *Shulchan Aruch* says that upon awakening in the morning, one must strengthen himself like a lion (“*yisgaber k’ari*”), to serve the Creator. The lion’s identifying trait is *gevurah*, strength.

Gevurah, symbolized by the lion’s strength, is referring to the ‘lion’ of Dan. The power of Dan is the power to be a ‘lion’ in terms of exercising *gevurah*; to illustrate, the tribe of Dan are called the protectors of the Jewish people. In this aspect, Dan is referred to as the ‘lion’: he shows strength, as he tries to fight the forces of evil.

When a person awakens from sleep, he must ‘strengthen himself like a lion’. We can view this with a deeper understanding: Chazal say that sleep is a sixtieth of death; thus, getting up from sleep is like rising from a degree of death. Death was caused by the Serpent. But Dan is called both the lion and the serpent. Dan is a ‘lion’ with regards to the fact that he can strengthen himself and come out of the serpent’s hold on him (the forces of evil), and pull himself out of the serpent’s grasp. Dan is called the serpent, but his gift is that he can also come out of the ‘serpent’ that he is compared to: because he is also called a ‘lion’. That is the ‘lion of Dan’: his aspect of *gevurah*, to strengthen himself and overcome evil.

Yehuda’s power to be a lion, though, serves a totally different (and higher) purpose than Dan’s ‘lion’ aspect. Yehuda’s role is not merely to overcome evil and to rise above it. One of the animals pictured on the legs of the *Merkavah* (the “Holy Chariot” in Heaven), is the lion, and it is on the

right side of the *Merkavah*, which shows that the lion symbolizes *malchus*. Yehuda's purpose is to reveal *malchus*.

These are very different aspects of the concept of the 'lion'. The 'lion of Dan' represents coming out of evil and lowliness; this is the 'lower lion', for it is not yet the ultimate power of the lion. The 'lion of Yehuda', which is the 'higher lion', is the lion that reveals *malchus*. The lion is king over all the animals, for it is the most exalted. This brings out the true concept of the lion: it is king. This is the higher lion (which is invincible): the lion of Yehuda.

The Depth of The Destruction

Now we can have a deeper understanding of what the destruction was to the *Beis HaMikdash*, and what our *avodah* is, during these days.

The 'destruction' is essentially a situation where we remain at the level of Dan and we aren't accessing the higher perspective, Yehuda. When we think that *gevurah* means to merely overcome evil, and we are unaware of the *malchus* which we must come to reveal, *this* is the depth of destruction! It is this perspective which could allow Nevuchadnezzar attack.

But remember, Nevuchadnezzar could only destroy our 'lower' lion, the lion of Dan, and not our 'higher' lion, Yehuda.

One has an *avodah* to fight evil, to strengthen himself and "be strong like a lion", but ultimately, this aspect of *gevurah* is not using the essence of the lion's power; it is only the serpent's power. This is Dan's power, not Yehuda's power. Thus it is not enough to really stand a chance against evil. Only the "lion" within us can really overcome evil, and only the lion within us reveals our higher purpose.

The purpose of overcoming evil is not merely to overcome evil and rise above our earthiness where we can shake off the dust from ourselves. The purpose is to reveal our inherent *malchus*!

How To View Our Struggle With Evil

Now we will speak about this in simpler language.

You can have a person who is always fighting his *yetzer hora*, and he is constantly involved with the struggle in overcoming evil. But he might always dealing with thoughts of *shiflus* (low self-worth) towards himself. He is always busy fighting his feelings of low self-worth that is created from having to deal with overcoming disgusting evil acts. This kind of person is always fighting the *yetzer hora*, and commendably so – but he is only fighting with the power of Dan, which is not powerful enough to withstand the forces of evil.

The higher way of being "as strong like a lion" when we try to overcome evil is to realize the very essence (*atzmiyus*) of our *neshamah*. Our *neshamah* is called "daughter of the King": we must

remember our royal status and awaken it. Only then are we truly invincible to evil, and we can then fight evil using this higher perspective. But even more so, we access the *malchus* that is within us, which is the ultimate purpose.

In the month of Av, we mourn the destruction. Our eyes fill with tears, and we realize how low we have sunk, into the very ‘earth’ of This World. But we must realize that we can rise above all of this ‘earth’. We can shake off the dust that has gathered on us and be free of it. The Sages say that “Whoever mourns it, will merit to see it rebuilt”. We can rise above all that we have sunken into, but we must understand: how, exactly, do we rise? What is our perspective as we try to do so?

If one tries to fight the evil of this world because he is merely by trying to overcome, he still has a lowly perspective of himself. And in addition, he will not really succeed in fighting evil, when he has such a perspective. He still thinks he is part of the earth, and therefore, he is not immune to destruction.

But if one realizes that he can rise above his earthy aspect, when he has a yearning to come out of it because he realizes his inherent *malchus*, he reveals the true power of the Jewish people, who are called *bnei melachim* (sons of kings). It is from this deep place in our soul that we can view our struggles with, which we can use to ultimately persevere.

The Depth of ‘Getting Up After Chatzos’ on Tisha B’Av

The *halacha* is that after *chatzos* (noon) on *Tisha B’Av*, we rise from the ground, because we are taught that after *chatzos*, the *Moshiach* is born; our consolation begins. But we must know how to ‘rise’. To what are we rising to?

On an inner level, we cannot rise from the earth if we remain on the level of Dan’s *gevurah*. But if we access the level of Yehuda, then we will be able to. Rising from the earth means that we can rise above evil and earthiness, by fighting it and not giving in (*gevurah*/Dan) and it also means that we can truly be ‘as strong as a lion’ and reveal the inner royalty of a Jew’s soul (*malchus*/Yehuda) - the deep and pure point in our soul which yearns for the revelation of the ultimate *malchus*.

In Conclusion

May we merit, with the help of Hashem, to reach the level of “His father is from Yehuda, and his mother is from Dan³⁵”: that when we fight evil, it should be with both of these aspects. Then we will merit, with *siyata d’shamaya*, the light of *Moshiach*, and the revelation of the complete redemption to all of the Jewish people. *Amen, V’Amen*.

³⁵ In quote of the words of Rashi concerning the *Mashiach*’s ancestry.

10 | *Awakening Yourself To Tears During the 9 Days*³⁶

How Do You Feel Sad At Something You Never Saw?

Our *avodah* during the Nine Days involves certain actions we do, which eventually lead up to the day of *Tisha B'Av* – the very climax of our pain. There are outer actions we have to do according to *halachah*, but there is also an inner work to be done.

It is hard for us to imagine what it was like when we had a *Beis HaMikdash*. It is very far from our mind to comprehend, and it is hard as well even to imagine it. We are thus very far from feeling the pain of the destruction. How can we feel pain over something which we never saw, something which we can't even really imagine?

The *avodah* we have during the Nine Days is about feeling the pain [over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash* and what we used to have, before we were placed into exile]. Pain involves our deep emotions. Thus, we need to try to awaken ourselves to cry about what happened during these days. But it is very difficult for many people to do so. People read the stories and the history of what happened during those times, yet it is still very hard for people to actually feel pain and to cry over the tragic period of our history.

We need to find a way to open ourselves up, so that we can feel the depth of the pain of the destruction. We will try here, with the help of Hashem, to draw these matters closer to our hearts, so we can come to feel the pain that we are supposed to feel; to feel how the *Shechinah* is in exile.

The Superficial Way To Feel Pain

There are two ways how a person can try to draw himself close to mourning over the destruction. One of them is not that effective, while the other way is more effective.

One way (mentioned above) is for a person to awaken himself, in a superficial manner, to get inspired. This can be done by reading the statements of Chazal about the destruction. For most people, however, this doesn't work, because it is hard to actually feel the pain of the destruction just by reading about the tragedies that went on. A person reads on and on about the many tragedies that Chazal say took place, yet he still doesn't feel that it has to do with him, and it doesn't get him to cry.

The Inner Way To Awaken Pain Over the Destruction

³⁶ <http://bilvavi.net/english/bein-hamitzarim-008-nine-days-awakening-yourself-tears>

An alternative way, which is the way that will help us, is to awaken from within ourselves an internal kind of crying. Then we will be able to actually cry on our outside as well.

This is not accomplished through the usual inspiration that comes from outside of ourselves. We will explain.

All the *maalos* (qualities) which the soul can attain – such as *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven), *kedushah* (holiness), *taharah* (purity), etc. – are all desires of our soul to gain more and more levels in *ruchniyus* (spirituality). This is the universal desire of the Jewish people: to grow in our *ruchniyus*. But we must understand that inspiration alone will not suffice in order to accomplish this.

When the *Beis Hamikdash* was around, there was the *Shechinah* (Hashem's revealed Presence), and this enabled people to reach very high levels in their *ruchniyus*. The great spiritual light that existed then affected all people, even the simplest Jew. The Vilna Gaon writes that we have no comprehension of even the simplest Jew of those times.

If anyone thinks about this – not just intellectually, but as an internalization – he would really see what we are missing today. The desires that we have to grow in *ruchniyus*, and the frustrations that we each have in trying to grow, would not have existed had we lived in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*! It was so much easier to serve Hashem then! If we think about this and what this means for us, we would realize the true depth of the destruction.

All of our frustrations, and all of our various failures, are all a result of exile. Because we don't have the *Shechinah*, it is so much harder for us to serve Hashem. We have yearnings to serve Hashem, we really want to grow in Torah and *mitzvos*, and in all areas of our *ruchniyus* - but we have so much frustration in trying to succeed. This is all because we don't have the *Shechinah*.

If this doesn't bother a person, that's a different problem altogether. We are talking about someone who does realize it's a problem. If a person realizes what he's missing, he should go deeper into this reflection and what it means: If I would have the *Beis Hamikdash* in my life, I wouldn't have so many problems in my *ruchniyus*. If a person thinks about this, he will be able to awaken the pain that he is supposed to have over the destruction. There is a lot to think about here: how far we are in our *ruchniyus*. How far we are from Torah, from Tefillah, from *Ahavas Yisrael*, from *shemiras einayim*, from *taharah*...and from all other areas we need to be better at.

Anyone who thinks about this – calmly, and in solitude (as the Chazon Ish writes to do) - will discover how painful this realization is, and this will bring a person to cry.

In Summary

The *avodah* during these days is to first contemplate this on at least an intellectual level, and then internalize it in our hearts: how much we are missing.

If we would have a *Beis Hamikdash*, our hearts would be different, our *daas* would be different, our *middos* would be different. Contemplate this, and you will realize how painful this discovery is.

And if you merit, it might even bring you to tears. This is how we can awaken ourselves to cry. Of course, this is not yet reaching the purpose of why we mourn. We are only saying how we can open ourselves up to feel the pain we are supposed to feel.

Most People Need This Approach

The true *Tisha B'Av* one is supposed to have is to feel the general painful situation of the Jewish people, but this is only reached by someone who has great *Ahavas Yisrael*. Most people, though, have not reached such a high level of *Ahavas Yisrael*, and therefore they find it hard to cry over the situation of our people today.

That being the case, practically speaking, most people will need to simply awaken from within themselves a personal reason to cry, such as by thinking about one's personal frustrations in areas of *ruchniyus*.

We can only cry over the loss of the *Shechinah* if we have already drawn ourselves close to the *Shechinah*, but most people aren't close to the *Shechinah*; therefore, it is hard for most people to relate to the concept of the "pain of the *Shechinah*." Therefore, most people need to simply open themselves up to cry: by thinking about their own private suffering, by thinking about how much we are missing from our own life.

The Higher Stage: Contemplating Another's Pain

Let us continue one step further, but first make sure that you are on the first level: first realize where you are in your *ruchniyus*. If your heart has been opened at least to this first level, you can continue to the next level we are about to say.

Think about the following. Who do you love on this world? Everyone has people whom they love on this world; who do you love the most on this world? Think about this, and now, think: Do you feel the pain of the person whom you love the most? Do you feel his physical pain? If you do, what about the things that bother him spiritually? Do you feel any pain, whatsoever, at his/her situation? If you do, now connect yourself to his/her pain. Then, think about the following? The pain that your beloved person has is all a result of the loss of the *Shechinah* on this world! This is because all of the pain in the world comes from the absence of *Shechinah*.

What If Someone Doesn't Care About Ruchniyus?

In the first stage we explained, we explained how a person should try to awaken his spiritual pain and frustration, so that he can awaken himself to the pain and mourning over the loss of the *Shechinah*. But what if someone's spiritual situation doesn't bother him that much? What can he do

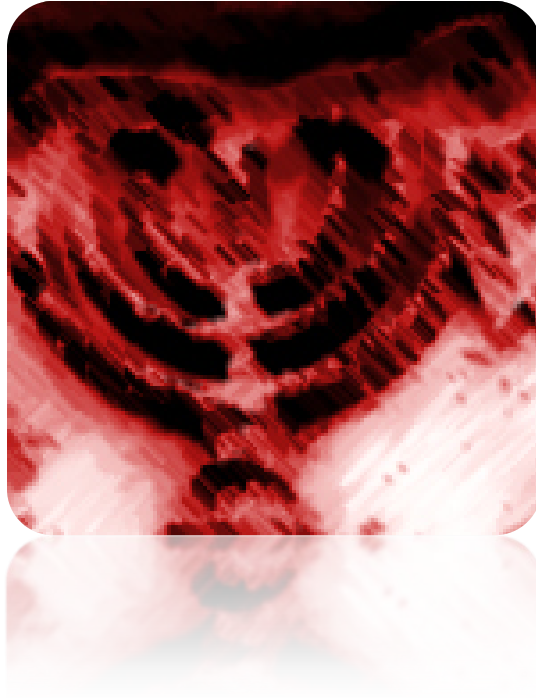
to awaken himself to tears over the loss of the Shechinah, if he doesn't care that much about his own *ruchniyus* in the first place?

He can at least think into his physical situation, and let himself be bothered by the things in his life that are not alright. Every person has things in his life that bother him. After all, who doesn't have hardship and difficulty on this world? Thinking about this can help a person open himself up to the idea of feeling pain, and now that he has brought the pain to the surface, he can remind himself that all of this pain is because we are in exile, because we don't have the *Shechinah*.

A person has to sit and think about these reflections during *Tisha B'Av*, so that he can open himself up to the idea of pain and mourning over the exile and the loss of the *Shechinah*. Besides for hearing *Eichah* and reciting *Kinnos* on *Tisha B'Av*, a person must make sure to actually make these reflections and awaken himself to feel some level of pain.

This self-introspection must be done privately. Simply think about what pains you in your life. Anyone is on the level of doing this. Then, after you remind yourself of the pain you have in your life, realize that all of your pain is rooted in the fact that we do not have a *Beis Hamikdash*, that we are missing the *Shechinah*. This will help you open yourself up to the concept of pain, and it will be a small opening for you to help you feel the real pain you are supposed to feel.

May we all merit to feel the pain of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, and to be of those whom our Sages say, "Whoever mourns Jerusalem, will merit to see it in its rebuilding."



Tisha B'Av

11 | *Introspection on Tisha B'Av*³⁷

Knowing vs. Feeling

We will try a little, with *siyata d'shmaya*, to somewhat reach, perhaps, the essence of this day [*Tisha B'Av*].

We generally know all there is to know [about the Nine Days]. We all know the reasons why we must mourn, and the necessity to mourn. But the distance between what we *know*, and what we *feel* is usually a very far distance.

Sometimes the distance between knowledge and feeling is bigger and sometimes it is smaller, but either way, there is always a big difference between what we *know* with what we *feel*. If we ask any person if we are supposed to mourn over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, any person will answer, "Yes." If we ask any person if we should cry over this, the answer is also "Yes." If we ask a person if he really feels like doing so, though, we will get different answers.

The minimum pain we are supposed to feel is to at least be pained over the fact that we don't feel the pain we know we are supposed to feel and that we aren't succeeding in getting ourselves to cry. If even this doesn't bother the person, this person is very far from the *avodah* of these days.

We will try here to draw the matters closer to us, so that it should at least be made possible for us to have somewhat of a degree of mourning and weeping.

Some Introductory Points

However, it is right now the 29th day of Tamuz, and we hope Mashiach will come soon. Therefore, the words here are only relevant if Mashiach isn't here before the 9th of Av. Additionally, the words here are not only applicable to *Tisha B'Av* of this year. There is no way for a person to suddenly change in the timespan between the 29th of Tamuz and the 9th of Av. The heart doesn't suddenly get opened so fast. If someone knows of such a way, I will be very happy to hear of it.

If the words we will say here are indeed helpful to you, at best they might help you for next year *Tisha B'Av* [because there is no way to change so fast by the time it comes this year's *Tisha B'Av*]. Hashem should bring Mashiach by then, and hopefully way before that; he should come today, and then today's *derasha* will just be one of the many lectures of history. Our *avodah* is to try to prepare ourselves [for *Tisha B'Av*] - and that is what we will try to do here.

³⁷ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/bein-hamitzarim-002-introspection-tisha-b%E2%80%99av>

Why Do We Have A Hard Time With the Nine Days?

When a person hears good news, does he need to prepare for it? Usually, if it is very good news, you don't need to prepare for the news in order to enjoy it. You are just happy and excited to hear the good news, whether you expected it or not. The same is true of hearing sad news; it has an intense effect on us even if we didn't prepare for it. If so, why is it that our soul usually doesn't feel an intense sadness over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*?

Our Sages already addressed this question, and gave several answers.

(1) **“Old mourning”**. The mourning is not new to us. We go through this mourning ever year, therefore we have grown used to it, so we're not as affected by it.

(2) **We don't feel it**. Another reason given is because a person simply doesn't feel that the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed. We might *know* very well that the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, but do we *feel* that it was destroyed? It is a whole different question.

(3) **We can't recognize it**. The *Beis HaMikdash* has been destroyed already for close to 2,000 years. We are only able to know what something is when we know what its opposite is.

For example, we know what light is because we know what darkness is, and we know what the color white is because we know what the color black is. We would be able to relate to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* if we would have seen it standing. But because none of saw it (in the current lifetime we are in), we do not have an actual recognition of the destruction. Because we never saw the *Beis HaMikdash*, it is hard for us to relate to its destruction.

So there is actually a third reason why it is hard for our soul to relate the destruction, (and on a deeper note, it is really another angle of the second reason, the fact that we don't feel the destruction): we can only recognize something from its opposite, and since we do not know what it means for the *Beis HaMikdash* to be standing, we do not recognize its destruction.

A Closed Heart Vs. An Opened Heart

Yet there is another reason why it is hard for us to relate to the destruction, and it precedes all of the above three reasons.

The feelings of joy, pain, and sadness are not intellectual abilities. They do not stem from the *daas* of our intellect; they stem from the *daas* of our heart [when it combines with the *daas* of the intellect]. When one's heart is alive with spiritual feelings, it is working properly, and it breathes the reality in front of us. When a person isn't sensitive to spiritual feelings, when he never reflects into the spiritual realities in front of us, he is far from what it means to have joy on the festivals, he is far from improving during the Ten Days of Repentance, and he is far from the pain that we are supposed to feel during the Nine Days through *Tisha B'Av*.

Thus, if one doesn't feel the pain over the destruction during the Nine Days, this is only a 'branch' of the problem, a symptom of something deeper. The 'root' of the problem is the fact that he is not in touch with his spiritual heart. It's not because he doesn't know how to feel pain over the Destruction. The problem starts way before that: it is because something is missing from his heart altogether.

By contrast, one whose heart is spiritually alive during the rest of the year doesn't have to exert himself to feel pain during the Nine Days; it is natural for him. He can cry [as he says the *Kinnos*] with almost no effort to do so.

To illustrate what we mean, when a woman has just lost her husband, anything that reminds her of her husband causes her to cry and feel pain over his loss. She doesn't have to think about this all day in order for this to happen (if she would think about it the entire day, this is extreme behavior). As soon as she remembers her husband, she finds her tears natural, because her heart is already active.

If one has to exert himself in order to be able to cry and mourn, if he has to read a *sefer* that speaks about the tragedies of the destruction, filled with commentaries, and through this he awakens himself and gets himself to feel something, we cannot say that is pointless; it might awaken him a little. But it is like someone whose heart has stopped working and he gets a fake heart placed in him which acts mechanically.

If it needs to be explained to him, if he has to read about it in order to strain his mind and think into it so that he can get himself to shed a tear, this is all proof that his heart isn't activated during the rest of the year. There is something wrong with his heart. It's not that he has a problem with the Nine Days. His lack of emotion during the Nine Days is simply a sign of his general situation throughout the year, which has much left to be desired.

A heart that is spiritually alive is the kind of heart we need to live with during the entire year. Such a life enables a person to feel the joy of the festivals, to feel the closeness to Hashem that can be attained during the Ten Days of Repentance, and to weep during the Nine Days.

It is clear to anyone that when someone has just lost a parent, when it is right before the funeral and he hasn't even started yet the seven days of mourning, he is naturally in pain. Imagine if we have a person who is not the type to feel pain or cry, and it is brought to him a book which explains why he should feel pain over the loss of his parent, and it is told to him that he should study it in-depth, so that he can understand why he needs to feel the pain of the loss. We can all understand that something is very wrong here with this person.

So there is no piece of advice that can help you come to feel pain over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* and to help you shed tears over it. There *is* a way, however, for you to open your heart during the course of the rest of the year - and if your heart has been opened during the year, then when the Nine Days arrive, you'll naturally feel the pain you are supposed to feel and you will find it natural to cry.

Destruction On The Communal Level and On The Individual Level

Let's go further.

The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* is a very obscure matter from us, something very far from us which we don't understand. It is something that the Jewish people have been mourning about for thousands of years. But there are two dimensions to the destruction. There was destruction on the communal level, and there was also a destruction on an individual level.

The communal destruction was the fact that the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, for all generations to come. There was also an inner and more private destruction that took place to each person on an individual level: the *Shechinah* [Hashem's presence] is no longer openly revealed in a person's life. This is each person's own private destruction.

If one does not lead a life in which the *Beis HaMikdash* is built in his heart and he does not feel pain over the absence of his own personal *Beis HaMikdash*, he won't be able to suddenly feel the communal destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* when *Tisha B'Av* comes.

If one does not recognize personally in himself what it means to have a *Beis HaMikdash* in oneself, if one doesn't feel bad that it's missing, he can't suddenly feel pain when the Nine Days arrive. Even if one can get himself to feel pain, it might be because he has gotten emotional, but this is usually not a crying that comes from a deep place in the soul. One of our *Gedolim* said that just as our ears and nose produce excess fluid, so can our eyes produce excess fluid – in the form of tears. This doesn't mean that all tears are useless, *chas v'shalom*; it means that not every tear that a person sheds is truthful.

The deepest place in our heart, its essence, is described in the verse, "*The rock of my heart and my portion, is G-d.*" The essence of our heart is covered over by many external layers. The external layer of our heart includes our various desires. As long as a person's extraneous desires fill his heart, he can't feel Hashem's presence in his heart. And if he doesn't feel Hashem's presence in his heart, he does not know what it means to have a personal *Beis HaMikdash* within, and he will find it most difficult to feel pain and to cry during the Nine Days and *Tisha B'Av*.

If it bothers him that he doesn't feel the pain he knows he should feel, this is a good sign; *Baruch Hashem* that he at least feels this. But how will he ever be able to cry over it? Can someone cry over something he has never really cared about?

A person cries about something he wanted and desired which he has either lost or hasn't attained. The less a person wanted something, the less likely he is to cry over it if he loses it. If a person has a *ratzon* (will) to feel Hashem's presence in his life, if he has a very deep desire to feel Him within himself, then when *Tisha B'Av* comes, at least he will be able to feel what he is personally missing in his life.

(This doesn't yet mean he will feel the communal level of mourning, which is an entirely different matter that we hope to soon explain. But at least he will feel the destruction on a private and inner level.)

One who doesn't feel Hashem in his heart during the rest of the year won't suddenly change during the Nine Days. People do not change so fast. There is no way to suddenly change and become sensitive to spiritual feelings in such a short amount of time. The only way is for one to already have an active heart from during the rest of the year: to desire Hashem's presence. If a person can relate to that during the rest of the year, he is at least connected to the inner world within him, and he will find it natural to feel mourning when the Nine Days arrive.

The Nine Days are a sign of what a person's level is during the rest of the year. If one's heart is already a bit open from the rest of the year, he can burst out in tears when he realizes how much he is missing. This, in and of itself, is already commendable.

Joy and Pain At Once

"When Av enters, joy is lessened."³⁸ It is brought in *Halachah* that we do not build things during the month of Av, and we also do not engage in anything that gives us particular joy; additionally, we should not engage in unnecessary acts (There are exceptions according to *Halacha* when it affects one's livelihood).

Why is it that a person should only do what's necessary during Av? It is understandable if it is something that will bring joy. But why must we refrain from doing things during Av that are simply unnecessary?

The simple understanding is because it causes us to take our mind off mourning. But the deeper reason is as follows. When one removes his mind from mourning during the Nine Days, it really means that he is caught up in various pursuits of life.

The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* must cause us to cry, but we know that we cannot be this way during the rest of the year. We can't go on with sadness for that long. So how does a person survive the Nine Days? We can simply say that a person can get himself to be sad for the duration of the nine days. If one is more spiritual and purified, he can feel sadness every night through reciting *Tikkun Chatzos*.

But the true perspective is totally different than the above approach.

We are capable of joy, and we are also capable of sadness, pain, and crying. One who has removed his superficial desires is able to feel both joy and sadness at once. We don't mean that one day the person is sad and the next day he can feel joyous. Rather, there is a deep place in our soul which knows how to feel both joy and sadness at once. Sometimes either joy or sadness will dominate, but in essence, they can both be active at the same time.

When the festivals arrive, a person may be able to imagine that he is happy that the festival here. There are external factors which can give a person a superficial feeling of happiness on the festivals – such as meat and wine. After all, the Sages say that "There is no *simcha* (happiness) except in meat

³⁸ *Taanis* 29a

and wine.”³⁹ He might be able to get himself to be a little happy with such things. But if a person doesn’t know how to cry on *Tisha B’Av*, he does not know either how to be happy on Pesach!

The very soul in us which can feel pain is the very same soul in us which can feel joy. They are not separate aspects of our being; they stem from the same place in our soul. This is because each thing is comprised of itself and its opposite (“*dovor v’hipucho*”). Joy and happiness are opposites; in order to appreciate joy, you must know what sadness is, and in order to know what sadness is, you need to experience joy. Without knowing how to feel *simcha*, one does not know how to feel pain; if one does not know of pain, he will not know what it means to be truly happy.

David HaMelech said, “*My heart is empty within me.*” The sefer he wrote, *sefer Tehillim*, was written after he felt the empty space in his heart. In sefer *Tehillim*, many kinds of experiences are described. There were times that Dovid HaMelech felt lowly, times where he felt pain, and times where he felt joyous. It is well-known that sefer *Tehillim* contains all of the experiences that every Jew will ever go through. This was all due to Dovid HaMelech’s achievement of emptying out his heart from all desires, where he was left with nothing in his heart except for the desire for Hashem’s will. In that deep place in the heart, one can feel both joy and sadness there at once, and the contradicting emotions are both truthful.

During the month of Av, we lessen activities that are unnecessary, and the reason for this is not simply because we must not take our mind off the mourning of the Nine Days. Rather, it is because if a person has desires in his heart that are unnecessary, he cannot be connected to the concept of the Nine Days. His heart is far from where it is supposed to be.

From a superficial level, a person observes the *halachos* of the Nine Days. He opens up the *Shulchan Aruch* and finds out the *halachah* and he doesn’t do all the activities he normally does. It is certainly commendable that he follows *halachah*, but if this is his entire idea of mourning during the Nine Days, he has missed the boat. The whole reason why we refrain from certain activities during the Nine Days is because it is supposed to be used as a means to erase the unnecessary desires from our heart and live a truthful life, of “*My heart is empty [from desires] within me.*”

The deep place in our heart, which is removed from all unnecessary desires, is the place in us which can feel contradictory emotions at once. It can feel joy and sadness at once, and it is the place in the soul which enables a person to have true tears.

Getting Back Our Simplicity

Why is it that a child cries easily, whereas an adult doesn’t cry so fast? It is because a child lives in a simple reality. He simply has a desire for something, and if he doesn’t get it, he cries. An adult, though, has developed layers upon his soul. He has to dig deep into himself in order to bring out his emotions. If one lives in the simple point in his soul which feels like “*an infant in its mother’s lap*”, he naturally can feel joy and he can naturally feel pain, just as easily as he feels physical sensation.

³⁹ *Pesachim 109a*

The *avodah* of a person is not to work hard on himself to bring out his emotions in order to get himself to cry. That is not the way. The *avodah* is for a person to develop his heart in the first place. Once the heart is functioning properly, everything else will follow as a result. There will be natural emotions of joy when appropriate, and there will be natural emotions of sadness where appropriate. He will be a “*ben ish chai*”, a “living person”.

Thus, as we said in the beginning of the chapter, there is no advice that can guide a person to teach him how to mourn, in the time between the 29th of Tamuz and the 9th of Av. Even if one could teach himself how to cry by the time it comes the 9th of Av, the tears wouldn't be coming from a truthful place in himself.

Nullifying Our Desires

There is only one way, and it is very simple, fundamental, and true. But it takes time, and it is not developed instantly. It is a way to live life, and it is not just for the Nine Days. It is for a person to remove his extra desires, on a constant basis, throughout the course of the year. The Sages said it: “Nullify your will before His will.”

A person should get used to keep nullifying his desires, one after one. The Chazon Ish says that every time a person breaks his will, it adds a stone to the courtyard of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

But if a person wants to remain with all of his desires, and he also wants to cry on *Tisha B'Av*, and he also wants to be happy on the festivals, and he also wants a perfect wife and perfect children and perfect health and perfect livelihood, and honor, and an outpouring of blessing in his life, and _____, then when the Nine Days come, he won't be able to find himself at all amidst all of these desires.

The issue is very simple and fundamental: How does a person live during the rest of the year? We all have difficulties. But what is the root of all our difficulties? It is always one single reason: our various unfulfilled desires.

The only desire that we must seek to fulfill is the desire to do Hashem's will! All desires other than this are not desires we need. Sometimes we do need to fulfill a certain desire we have, but even in such situations, it is only a means to a greater end. The only desire we need to have is “Our will is to do Your will.” All other desires need to be eliminated, one by one, slowly and in steps.

If one is motivated to do this throughout the course of the year, he should so with the attitude that this is our life's task. Thus, each year when it comes *Tisha B'Av*, this must cause a person to feel a deeper degree of the destruction. The tears will then flow freely and naturally, as an automatic result. But this will only happen when a person realizes that life is all about giving up our desires for Hashem, and to replace all of our desires with one single desire alone: the desire to do Hashem's will.

Using Suffering To Rid Ourselves of Desires

Now we will try to explain how we can practically work on this.

The Gemara says that when a person puts his hand into his pocket and he doesn't find money there, this is a form of suffering. If he wanted two coins and he only found one coin, this is a degree of suffering. Let us contemplate what the depth of the suffering is.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of sin. The first *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed due to the three cardinal sins of murder, adultery, and idol worship. The second *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed due to baseless hatred.⁴⁰

The Sages say that suffering takes away the effect of sin. How does this work? Why does suffering take away the effect of a sin? A sin means that a person has actualized a negative desire. How is a sin rectified? If the person has stole, he must return that which he stole. But with other sins, how does a person undo what he did?

Suffering takes away the root of the problem of the sin. The person had a desire to sin, and that was why he sinned. With suffering, the root of the sin can be uprooted, because the person's desire for the sin has been removed, through the suffering. Suffering goes against our will; we don't want it. Accepting suffering with love and with *emunah* helps us get rid of our desire for the sin.

Therefore, suffering only atones for the sin if the person's desire for the sin has been removed. Sometimes people go through physical suffering but he remains unchanged. He still has the same desire to sin, and he might even have stronger desires for the sin, because he is waiting for his suffering to pass so that he can go fulfill his desires. Suffering doesn't always make a person change his desires.

The desires in a person destroy a person's own "personal *Beis HaMikdash*".⁴¹ They are like a strange god living inside the person. This is not an idea that comes from a *derasha*. It is absolutely a reality. The fact that the *Shechinah* dwells in each person's heart is not an idea - it is reality. The only thing that holds back that revelation from a person is his desires. When a person removes the desires, G-dliness is revealed in the person.

How can a person know if he is going on the right path or not? If he sees that he is succeeded in getting rid of some of his desires and he feels that he is closer to doing Hashem's will, this is a sign that his soul is becoming healthier.

Anything that we seek to acquire needs intention in order to acquire. In order for the heart to be acquired, one must break his desires. But it must be done with the intention that one is trying to reveal his inner will of the soul (the will to do Hashem's will). When a person succeeds in breaking a desire, he can feel purer afterwards; he can feel like something has been cleared from his system.

Inspiration Vs. Building Our Life

⁴⁰ Yoma 9b

⁴¹ See *Nefesh HaChaim* – Gate I

We need to change the root of how we view life; to wonder how we are supposed to live to begin with. *Baruch Hashem*, when it comes the night of *Tisha B'Av*, there are lecturers, and sometimes it helps a little. Sometimes the speaker will inspire himself as he is speaking, and then others will be inspired with him, as a result. But it is clear that something is very much missing here. One cannot build his life based upon one *derasha*!

A *derasha* does almost nothing for a person. A *derasha* remains a *derasha*, and the truth remains the truth. A *derasha* can only inspire a person minimally. What more do we need to hear/read in order for us to change our perspective in life? Inspiration is gone as soon as it comes. It has a very fleeting effect.

The issue is how to live to begin with, from the very start! We should not be interested in inspiration. The question is how we should live life to begin with – to wonder how a proper life should look like from the very start.⁴²

I was once in a place where I spoke to some boys who had become irreligious (may G-d have mercy on them). I said to them whatever it is that I had to say to them, and then one of the boys said to me, “You are giving me solutions that work for me *after* I’ve fallen. But what is the solution *before* I fall?”

People want to know why kids are ‘going off the *derech*’. But nobody ‘went off the *derech*’. They were never on the *derech* to begin with! There was never a “*derech*” that they were on to begin with to fall off of it.

We must have a “*derech*” (way) in how to live life to begin with! Speeches and inspiring lectures won’t do it for us. What people really need is to make a soul-accounting and get to the root, and wonder: how should we live life from the very start?

Imagine if a man gets married and he finds out that his wife is mentally unstable (G-d forbid). He goes to his Rav and tells him the story. The Rav is in doubt if the marriage was ever valid to begin with. It’s not that there was a marriage here and now he will have to get divorced. There was never a marriage here to begin with!

You are all past the age of 30 already. You’ve all heard many *derashos* in your life; some of them were very true and some were less true, but the issue really is if you can get to the root of how to live life. We must understand that our life is not about gathering knowledge. Rabbeinu Yonah writes that if one is on a path that is not good, he must get himself off the path and take a new path. If something was wrong in a person’s life from the start, even living 1000 years and hearing *derashos* and amassing all that much knowledge will be nothing. A person can do many *mitzvos* yet his heart doesn’t change inside. We see that people have been davening and putting on *tefillin* for many years yet they don’t feel a thing from it.

⁴² See *Getting To Know Your Happiness #011 – Raising Happy Children*

Reb Chatzkel Levenstein zt”l would say, “People have been listening to me speak for 20 years, but they haven’t even begun to understand what I mean.” When a person’s heart is closed, nothing he hears will change him.

Utilizing Tisha B’Av To Its Fullest

All of the times of the year Hashem gave to us are here as a reminder to ask ourselves if we are living life in the right way to begin with; if we are living a life of building ourselves. The Nine Days are also such a time. It is a time where we need to bring our life to halt and wonder how we can build our soul. It takes time to build the soul, just like it takes time to build the *Beis HaMikdash*. In order for a person to build himself, he must bring his life to a halt and make a self-accounting on how to live life to begin with.

On *Tisha B’Av*, it is forbidden to learn Torah. What does a person do with his free time on *Tisha B’Av*? Baruch Hashem, there’s Kol HaLashon, or you can go to the speeches that are in town, which is filled with men and women who are all willing to listen to the speaker. But what is the point of *Tisha B’Av*? Why was this day given to us? We can’t learn Torah, we can’t do any labor, so what are we supposed to do with ourselves on this day? Think about the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*? That is true, but the depth of *Tisha B’Av* is to bring our life to a halt and empty ourselves out of all desires.

We can’t even learn Torah, which is the most important desire to have (other than the desire to do Hashem’s will). We are supposed to just bring our lives to a halt and we begin to think of a new life for ourselves!

Find a quiet place, and reflect, from a silent place within yourself. The Nine Days, and especially *Tisha B’Av*, are a time to reflect and to bring the routine of life to a halt, and ask ourselves how to live life from the start. *Tisha B’Av* is not a time to seek what is ‘permissible’ to do and which parts of Torah are ‘permissible’ to learn. It is a time to bring all of your life to a halt. If one seeks truth, he must wonder, as he reflects, on how he can rebuild his life anew.

Quiet Time Every Day To Reflect

Besides for *Tisha B’Av*, one needs to have set times every day where one can reflect about the purpose of life. People might think they know what the purpose of life is, but a person can keep uncovering deeper meaning to the purpose of life every day, when he reflects quietly on this each day with inner silence. If one “doesn’t have any time” to do this, this is an inner destruction.

It is not only on *Tisha B’Av* and the Nine Days that you should do this. Every day, a person needs to have times where he reflects about the purpose of life and to think if he’s going in the right

direction⁴³. If you come to the conclusion that you are going in the way of Torah and mitzvos, keep going in that direction. But if you discover that this is not the case, you need to wonder how you can come to live a more truthful life.

This is what you need to do, each day, in order to acquire “purity of heart” and rid your heart from desires, which enables you to reach the point of “*My heart is empty within me*” as Dovid HaMelech said; and when your heart is slowly emptied from all of the desires, you can eventually come to the point where you have only one desire alone in your heart – the desire to do Hashem’s will.

Of course, our heart is purified from learning Torah and doing the mitzvos. But more specifically, it comes from nullifying our desires, until a person only has one desire left: the desire to do Hashem’s will.

Sincere Tears

When a person reaches that inner silence and he is in touch with the inner will of his soul (to do Hashem’s will), he can come to a true and inner crying that comes from the depths of his soul, from the pure point in the soul that only feels Hashem’s will. In that deep place in himself, he can feel how Hashem is mourning over His children who have been exiled from Him, who have “left their father’s table.” He won’t even have to strain himself to cry, because the tears will flow freely and naturally.

In Conclusion

Hashem gave us all *bechirah* (free will), and the free will was given to us so that we can choose to set aside time every day to reflect on how to live a truthful life. Just like a *baal teshuvah* changes his entire life when he leaves his world behind and he enters the world of Torah, so must an already *frum* person raised in the world of Torah go deeper into himself and enter a new world within him.

It might not always be easy and pleasant to make a self-accounting every day, but this is the only way of how we can live a truthful life and come to rebuild the personal *Beis HaMikdash* within ourselves.

I really hope that these words have been truly understood, not as a *derasha*, not as inspiration, and not even as preparation for the Nine Days; rather, that they be perceived as a way to live our life from the start.

⁴³ *Ramchal in sefer Derech Eretz Chaim. See Bilvavi_ Part_ 4_ Chapter_ 3*

12 | *The Perspective of Tisha B'Av*⁴⁴

Tisha B'Av: Mourning On The Collective Level

There is a fundamental difference between the Nine Days and *Tisha B'Av*.

One of the differences is that the Nine Days are not days of open mourning upon the *tzibur* (congregation). Although all people are obligated according to *halachah* to refrain from certain activities due to the period of mourning of this time, each person individually is following the *halachos*, and it does not look like open mourning. But on *Tisha B'Av*, every person openly mourns. The congregation gathers together to hear *Eichah* and recite *Kinnos*; everyone is coming together to mourn, and in an open manner. *Tisha B'Av* reveals the deep concept that mourning can connect everyone together.

There is our individual role, and there is our collective aspect. Each soul must be built on the individual level, and all souls of the Jewish people must form one structure. There is a personal *Beis HaMikdash* in each person's soul⁴⁵, and there is a collective *Beis HaMikdash* of the entire Jewish people. The *Beis HaMikdash* of the Jewish people was a structure that unified every Jew together. The mourning over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash* is therefore in the communal sense. It is not mourning over what I am personally missing in my own life, but because I am mourning over the loss that affects us as a whole.

The second *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred).⁴⁶ The depth of this is that the concept of unity was missing from the Jewish people; we stopped being a '*Kneses Yisrael*' (gathering of the Jewish people). The Sages say, "And it [*sinas chinam*] still dances amongst us" – because the reason that brought the destruction is still existent: we are lacking unity.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was built by collective efforts, for it symbolized that there was a unity binding together the entire Jewish people. Its destruction meant that we had lost that sense of collectiveness with each other.

Collectiveness

Mourning over the *Beis HaMikdash* is essentially about how we view Creation. When a person only sees Creation as random details and he doesn't see the collective whole of things, he is only mourning over what he is personally missing in his life, but not over the *Beis HaMikdash*.

⁴⁴ <http://bilvavi.net/english/bein-hamitzarim-003-avodah-nine-days-part-2-perspective>

⁴⁵ See *Nefesh HaChaim* – Gate I; and see previous shiur

⁴⁶ *Yoma 9b*

The *Beis HaMikdash* was not built for any one person, and it was not destroyed because of any one person. It was built for everyone, and it was destroyed as a result of everyone. Collectiveness is what builds it, and its destruction meant that its collectiveness was destroyed.

There is a very deep place in our soul which sees collectiveness, the greater picture of things that is beyond our private existence. This part of our soul isn't concerned with our private aspects of our personal life. There is *klal* (the general whole), and there is *perat* (details). The *perat* is part of the *klal*; we all come from the *klal*.

The depth of the destruction was that we stopped being a *klal*, and we each became our own individual "*perat*"; divorced from the *klal*. Even the desire in a person of "I want to serve Hashem" is a form of *perat*, for it is still coming from the "I", and although it is a spiritual desire, it still doesn't save a person from self-absorption. When a person views life from the perspective of his private "I", he has a very difficult time trying to mourn the *Beis HaMikdash*, because he is stuck in his own private existence and he can't go beyond himself.

This is actually the reason why we should mourn. The fact that a person only feels himself and his own problems, and he doesn't connect to the collective whole of the Jewish people, is reason to mourn.

The three cardinal sins which destroyed the first *Beis HaMikdash* were all forms of negative desires. The problem there was they didn't have the true desire in life; they didn't have the desire to do Hashem's will, thus they were filled with negative desires. The era of the second *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed due to baseless hatred, and this was a deeper issue. They were not filled with evil desires like in the era of the first *Beis HaMikdash*, but they were stuck in their own personal desires. They wanted to do Hashem's will, but it was from the perspective of "I want to do Hashem's will", with focus on the "I", and not being able to go past their private existence. This self-absorption was what paved the way for baseless hatred that destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Self-Absorption

If one has never nullified his improper desires yet, he surely can't get to the stage of getting beyond his private self. First one needs to get used to nullifying his desires and to want to do only Hashem's will, and after that stage, he can work on the stage of leaving his private existence and entering into the collective whole of the Jewish people.

We need to properly define what it means to want to do Hashem's will. It can either be coming from a selfless place in ourselves, or, it can be coming from a self-absorbed place in ourselves. If "I" want to do Hashem's will, does it mean simply that "I" should want this, or rather that I want what Hashem wants? If I want it because Hashem wants it, that is called desiring Hashem's will. But when the focus is on the "I", this is a subtle form of self-absorption.

The Destruction: Deepening Our Perspective

Before we continue, let's give the following brief introduction.

Sometimes we hear about concepts that are very lofty and we think that it is way above our level. Imagine if we tell a short person to take a book off the shelf that's much higher than where he stands. He will respond sheepishly, "What do you want from me? I'm too short. I can't reach it." So too, we might feel that way too when we hear about concepts that appear to be way above our normal level that we are capable of.

But the truth is that there's a point in our soul which is capable of reaching very high places that go above our normal level. If we don't access it, we remain with same immature and childish perspectives towards life. It will soon be *Tisha B'Av*. Do we feel towards it the same way we felt towards it when we were in first grade? We must graduate from the child's perspective towards *Tisha B'Av* and deepen our perspective.

Surely we can't skip to the higher perceptions before we've gotten the more elementary stages right. But we should know that there is always more depth to be uncovered.

The Soul of Creation

The first step is for a person to nullify his desires and have the desire to do Hashem's will, as we explained previously. After that, one needs to come out of his own private life.

The things that make us happy or feel pain should not be limited to what happens in our personal life. There is a huge and vast world that is beyond your own private existence. There are 600,000 souls in the Jewish people.

Creation also consists of the animals, the plants, and rocks. Hashem didn't create it all for nothing. One must come to feel the soul of Creation. The soul of Creation is a unified soul, and it is not felt through one's private self. It is not felt by someone who lives his life in self-absorption.

Why is it hard for a person to mourn the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*? There are many reasons we mentioned previously, but there is another answer. It is because the *Beis HaMikdash* was the collective unit of the Jewish people. When one is stuck in his own private existence and he can't connect to the collectiveness of the Jewish people, he does not feel the *Beis HaMikdash*. He doesn't feel what it was and what we are missing now that we don't have it.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was not simply destroyed due to *sinas chinam*. It was destroyed because each person considered himself to be his own individual *perat* and didn't view himself as part of the *klal*.

Rav Shach zt"l didn't eat between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. He said that it is because at this time of the day, there are thousands of Jewish boys going to irreligious schools, where they aren't even taught *Shema Yisrael*. At a time where these children are being taught heretical ideas instead of Hashem's Torah, he felt like he couldn't eat.

If one has the purpose of Creation in front of him all the time, he sees the world on a collective level, and if the world is reaching its purpose; as opposed to seeing the world through a private lens and how it relates to him on a personal level. When a person isn't aware of the purpose of Creation, he lives superficially, he doesn't see what is going on around him. He is self-absorbed. He doesn't breathe the soul of Creation; he doesn't breathe the purpose of Creation.

The perspective a person needs to be aware of is, as the Sages say, that the world will last for 6,000 years, and then it will be desolate⁴⁷. That's how we need to see the world: What did it look like in the beginning? What does it need to look like by the time its end comes? And what point are we in now? This is what it means to see through *klal*.

When a person sees only through *perat*, he doesn't see past his own personal life, his current lifetime. All he sees is the years of his own life, his children, his situation of *parnassah*, his health, etc. That is all he sees, and that is how he ends life. If he's a bit deeper, maybe he thinks about last week. He only lives in the moment and all he sees are details, and he never connects the dots.

Beginning To Come Out of Self-Absorption

Usually, people think that in order to have empathy for others and feel their pain and joy, we should learn how to love others. That is true, but how indeed do we come to love others?

One of the ways, which we have begun to explain previously, is to act against our will, whether it is a material desire or even a spiritual desire. Train yourself to do something for another person who you don't know at all – not a family member and not a friend. This helps you expand beyond your own personal world. This is the first step: breaking the private desires.

There is a concept of giving “*maaser*” (a tenth) from our *ruchniyus* (spirituality) for others. However, this is tricky, because sometimes a person might want to do this because he is motivated for self-gain; he awaits the reward that will come from this, similar to how there are people who give *maaser* because Chazal say that giving *maaser* makes a person wealthy. If that is the motivation, then he hasn't gotten anywhere.

Similarly, there are also people who are involved in *zikuy harabim* (benefitting the public), a matter which the *sefer Chovos HaLevovos* writes in high regard of, but the person is doing it entirely for self-gain because he knows that it entails reward. It's like if a person is told that he should be nice to his family because then he will gain from this.

The key is our motivation. If we are doing it for the sake of giving, this helps us break the self-absorption. If we are doing it with some ulterior motivation that involves self-gain, even if it is only minimal, we haven't even begun to go beyond the self.

The question is: Are you prepared to do something once a day that is purely for the sake of giving to another person, when there is absolutely nothing you will gain from it? That is the ultimate

⁴⁷ *Sanhedrin 97a*

question. I know some people who will never do anything unless they will get some kind of reward from it. They won't even give up 30 seconds of the day to do something for another person without intention for reward. They don't see a point in something if there is no reward involved.

Obviously, any level we want to acquire needs to be accompanied with prayer, so we need to pray to Hashem for help in acquiring this level.

Seeing Creation Through A Mature Lens

I will ask a question and get into a discussion from there. Can an eight-year old child be on the level of *Ahavas Yisrael*? Is he even close to it? If you train him to get used to giving to others, and if we can get him to *daven* that he reaches this level, maybe he will indeed acquire it. But, practically speaking, a child is missing the maturity and emotional strength that is needed to reach *Ahavas Yisrael*. So it does not just depend on giving more often and on prayer. A person needs the inner tools, in order to break free from his own private existence.

Our *avodah* does not only involve making use of our heart. We also need intellect. If all we needed is the heart, then we could get a child to have *Ahavas Yisrael*, through getting him to purify his heart, via the acts of giving to others. But our inner *avodah* is always a fusion of intellect and heart. If a person has only learned a little bit of Gemara and a little bit of *Halachah* and a little *mussar*, he will never become someone who can leave his private existence and connect himself to the *klal*. In order to become part of the *klal*, which is the *avodah* of the Nine Days, one needs a sharply developed *seichel* (intellect): to have the proper and mature perspective towards Creation.

There are two reasons why a person doesn't connect to the *klal*. One reason is when there are still extraneous desires in each person's heart, which make a person remain in self-absorption. Another reason is due to immaturity of the mind: when a person has a childish perspective towards life and he has never gained a more mature perspective on things. This is called *katnus hada'as* (small-mindedness), which also negatively affects the heart.

Of course, a person can still have love for others even if he doesn't have much *da'as*. But by remaining in his state of *katnus*, he won't ever come to deeply feel the purpose of Creation. If a person isn't cognizant of the purpose of Creation on a regular basis, he will never feel pained at the fact that the purpose of Creation hasn't been reached yet. We need to be able to see Creation through a lens that gets down to the root of things, as opposed to just seeing things at face value. This makes us leave the narrowed perspective of *perat* and enter us into the vast perspective of *klal*. We can give a few examples of this, but the point is to keep thinking of the earliest roots of a matter.

Examples of Seeing The Root

When a person learns *halachah*, if he just learns the *Mishnah Berurah* on it, he has learned the information, but he hasn't seen the root of the information. If he learns the *Shulchan Aruch* and

commentaries on it, he is getting deeper into the root of the *halachah*. If he looks deeper, he looks into the Gemara where the *halachah* was first discussed. Finally, if he looks into the Torah itself, he may find it there at its very root.

Here is another example. How do we view the Israeli-Arab conflict? If a person is unlearned in Torah, he views it purely as a political war. He is unaware that there is such a thing as the “exile of Yishmael” which has been written about by our Sages long ago. He wonders who is responsible, how negotiations can be made, and if there will ever be a way to solve it. But someone who has the Torah’s view on this sees a much bigger picture than this. He is aware that there are four exiles, and that the fourth exile is the exile of Edom, and that within the exile of Edom is the exile of Yishmael, which we are currently in.

The earliest roots of each thing are in the six days of Creation. The six days of Creation contained the entire Creation in its potential form, and everything stemmed from it. Whatever we have now is the very same material that was created during the first six days. It is just that the form of each thing took on different combinations, shapes, and sizes. When we view the world like this, we are getting to the early roots of each thing.

First we need to see where everything is in the Torah, and then we can see where it is in the six days of Creation. And in fact, there is an even earlier root to everything: the first day of Creation. Rashi says that the entire Creation was already created on the first day, in potential form. So there is a way for a person to see how each thing is really contained in the first day of Creation. When you see what the beginning of each thing is, you can know what its end will be. This is the way to see life through the perspective of *klal*.

This concept might sound very lofty, but it is a true view towards life. The Sages state that Hashem showed Adam HaRishon the entire history; he was shown the *Beis HaMikdash* being built, as well as its destruction. Adam HaRishon saw both destructions. Thus, the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was already contained in the first six days of creation (and from a deeper perspective, it was already contained in the first day of creation). If so, the *Beis HaMikdash* wasn’t simply built in Shlomo HaMelech’s times, and it wasn’t simply destroyed 410 years later and rebuilt in Ezra’s times and then destroyed 420 years later. That would only be starting from the middle of the picture.

Here is another example. On the night of *Tisha B’Av*, when the people heard the Spies’ report of the land of Israel, they cried, and Hashem declared that night ever since then as a night of crying for the generations, for it would become the night where we would become exiled. So the root of all crying is the episode of the Spies. But if we look deeper, we can uncover an even earlier root of exile: Adam was exiled from Gan Eden.

If a person wants to connect himself to an inner perspective towards life, and if he wants to make the most of the Nine Days, it will not be through reading *sefarim* about the *Beis HaMikdash* and its destruction and the future redemption. That is all very nice, and all the words are truth, but what one really needs, in order to properly mourn the destruction, is to gain the perspective of *klal*.

This is why *Klal Yisrael* is called “*Klal*” *Yisrael* – because we must see the *klal* of things, and that enables us to join with the *klal* that is *Klal Yisrael*. “Hashem, the Torah, and Yisrael are one.” If one wants to have a connection to Yisrael who are called “one”, a person needs the “one” view that comes from the Torah – the collective view that comes from seeing the *klal*, as opposed to seeing just *peratim*.

In order for a person to reach the view of *klal* and to come to have true *Ahavas Yisrael*, besides for what we said earlier that a person should get used to breaking one’s desires and self-absorption - and praying for this - the most important tool that one needs is to view life in terms of how everything relates to the broader picture of things. This is not just knowledge, and it is more than a feeling. It is to see all of Creation as one piece.

This is what it means to connect to the concept of “*Kneses Yisrael*”. If one has no connection to *Kneses Yisrael*, he cannot mourn over the *Beis HaMikdash*, because the *Beis HaMikdash* was not just another detail in Creation; it was the “gateway to Heaven”, which connected earth to Heaven, the plane of the physical with the Divine. It is not enough to “know” what *Kneses Yisrael* is, and to “know” what *Ahavas Yisrael* is. The *avodah* upon us is not merely to get ourselves to love others and remove hatred. This is not the depth of it. The depth of our *avodah* is to leave our narrowed perspective (*perat*) and instead see the world in terms of the collective (*klal*).

Gaining A Collective View

In order for a person to gain this perspective, he should study the words of Chazal about the *Beis HaMikdash* and the destruction, and amass a picture of it all. Then he will realize what the *Beis HaMikdash* was and feel connected to it, and mourn over its loss.

The Basic Level of Mourning

If someone feels like he can’t do this, he should reflect on what we are missing now in our world. Anybody today can feel how the situation in the world today is painful, and how much truth it is missing.

There are some people who have a very positive nature, and they don’t like to see things this way. When it comes *Tisha B’Av*, they don’t see what there is to be sad about, because they have a carefree attitude of seeing everything as good. This is not called the worthy trait of “*ayin tovah*” (good eye). An *ayin tovah* means that a person is aware that there are bad things he sees, but he sees the larger picture of things, and he is aware that everything is somehow good. But if someone thinks that everything is good, this is the imagination at work, not *ayin tovah*.

Anyone who reflects a little can see what kind of dismal situation the world is in. Maybe one doesn’t feel pain at this, but if one has managed to calm his desires a bit and he is sensitive to the

spiritual, he is able to feel pain at the situation of Creation today. If he has purified himself even more, he can feel a broken heart from all of this, and if he is even more purified, he is able to cry.

The situation in the world right now is very painful; the destruction is in front of our eyes. Even a person who doesn't think deeply and he sees things superficially is aware that the world today is simply living a life that is far from Hashem's Torah and mitzvos. Although the Torah is called our "Torah of life", this is not necessarily the case in many peoples' lives, who are absorbed in the various aspects of their life. One can just think of his own situation: how far he knows he is from the truth. This is the minimal level of mourning one must feel, if he can't relate to the idea of the collective view. So you don't have to be such a deep thinker in order to see the situation of Creation today and feel pain at it. As long as you have already begun to purify your heart a bit, you can feel it. There is so much suffering today, both physical and spiritual. There are so many tragedies. There are financial issues, health issues, etc. All of this resulted from the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Anyone on any level can think about this and come to feel some level of mourning, because you don't have to think deeply about this. Almost everyone is aware of it - unless a person is totally oblivious to the situation of the world today.

After The Pain: Regaining Inner Peace

When a person begins to feel the pain of the situation of the world today, he might find that it's too difficult to bear, and he will feel overwhelmed. A person might feel like he can't handle the pain and he will want to instead throw himself back into the Gemara, to take his mind off all of the pain. This is a normal feeling. What can a person do to take his mind off the pain? There is a quiet place in the soul where one can retreat to at times, where he can shut out the world and feel nothing but tranquility. A person is capable of detaching, on a healthy level, from all the pain and suffering he hears about, so that he can regain his inner peace.

To illustrate, the Chazon Ish was once asked how he is able to stay sane after all of the suffering that people would tell him about. He answered that as soon as he is finished listening and empathizing with the person, he would have a quiet place in his soul where he would retreat to and detach from the world. (This was also said of the *Sfas Emes*). "A dead person does not feel." In the final generations we live in, where we live amongst the 50th gate of impurity, people don't even feel what's wrong. Once a person does feel a little bit of what's going on, he will feel pained at how far the world is from the truth. Then he will be able to reach a deep place in himself, where he can reveal G-dliness.

In Conclusion

One has to gain the mature perspective towards the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, and he must not remain with the perspective he had towards it as a child. One has to feel connected to it in his soul, and not remain with a detached perspective towards it as if it's something totally far

removed from him. This is how we ‘build’ the *Beis HaMikdash* – when we acquire the perspective of *klal* towards it. Without the perspective of *klal* towards it, this is a form of destruction to the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Getting used to this perspective (*klal*) can transform a person into an entirely new being. Life contains depth within depth. When one sees the big picture of Creation, he realizes what he is missing from it. Just as we cannot demand that a child should understand what the destruction is, so is it illogical to demand from a 30-year old to relate to it, if he has never deepened his perception towards it and he lives in oblivion of what the purpose of the world is. He doesn’t know what is missing from Creation, because he never thinks about it.

Those who have purified their hearts and they see the big picture of things are the ones who live what the *Beis HaMikdash* is and they have real pain over its destruction, because they know what is missing. We all have the *bechirah* to nullify our desires and come to the point where all we want to do is Hashem’s will, and to see the *klal* of Creation, its bigger picture. Then we can realize how much Creation lays in disgrace. May we merit from Hashem to realize how much we are missing and to thus feel true mourning.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ In relation to this derasha, see also:
Elul – Getting Out of Yourself; and
Fixing Your Wind_014_Egoistic Talking; and
Fixing Your Wind_015_Self-Absorption; and
Tefillah_0111_Empathy

13| *Vitality From Mourning on Tisha Ba'Av*⁴⁹

A Time To Dread?

Sometimes our soul inside cringes at the very thought of the Nine Days - and especially when one thinks about *Tisha B'Av*. Our soul might not feel like entering such a place, and even before beginning the Nine Days, a person wishes it would be over already. It's only normal that when you feel sadness in the air around you, when people are walking around depressed, naturally, you can't wait for these days to finally end.

On a superficial level, a person doesn't enjoy the Nine Days simply because we don't like to suffer, and because we would rather be happy instead. But let's examine this a bit deeper.

Why People View The Nine Days As "Depressing"

Man contains contradictory aspects. Sadness and happiness are two opposite aspects of our soul. We cannot live based on either one of these emotions alone. If a person lives too much in one of these extremes, it will lead to a very problematic kind of life. The Rambam says that one must generally take the middle path, not an extreme path. One must make sure to remain centered in between the two extremes.

During the Nine Days, a person feels that the sadness of these times is pushing him away from the little bit of joy and vitality that he does have. He feels rather forced into the *avodah* of the Nine Days. He knows that he is "obligated" according to *Halacha* to mourn, and he does so without question, but deep down, he doesn't really want to do this.

The difficulty that people have with the Nine Days is rooted in the fact that there is a misconception about the Nine Days. People think that these days take away our *simcha*, and that these are days in which we must only feel *atzvus* (sadness). But this is a misunderstanding; with *atzvus* alone, we cannot survive. If a person only has *atzvus* during the Nine Days, he surely cannot survive this, because it feels like nothing but suffering. I am not talking about true *atzvus*, but the minimal feeling of *atzvus* that any person with a little bit of fear of G-d can feel during these days.

Firstly, we must understand that in general, people during the rest of the year don't have *simcha* and are living life in a very routine manner. As soon as the Nine Days arrive, the little amount of *simcha* that people do have is removed, and thus a person feels like he is left with nothing. That is why he finds the Nine Days to be so "depressing."

⁴⁹ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/bein-hamitzarim-004-vitality-mourning-tisha-ba%E2%80%99av>

How Did Yirmiyahu Write Eichah?

As is well-known, Yirmiyahu HaNavi wrote *sefer Eichah*. There is a famous question asked: The Sages state that all of books of the prophets were composed with *Ruach HaKodesh* (the holy spirit), and in order to receive *Ruach HaKodesh*, the prophet had to be in a state of joy. How then could Yirmiyahu write *Eichah*, the saddest book of our history, which he was surely not happy to write about? How could the *Ruach HaKodesh* have rested upon him amidst his great sadness?

Joy and Sadness At Once

The depth behind this matter is, because our soul can contain opposite emotions at once: joy and sadness.

The Nine Days are not here to take away all our happiness. If our happiness goes away during these days, it shows that we aren't really happy during the year. If we have true happiness during the rest of the year, even the Nine Days and *Tisha B'Av* cannot take away our happiness. There is more of a focus on sadness during these times, but the joy doesn't have to go away completely. In fact, if a person has true *simcha* during the rest of the year, he can have a degree of *simcha* even on *Tisha B'Av*.

Of course, it does not seem that these are days that can provide us with any joy. But from a deep perspective, we can feel both sadness, and joy, during these days – yet be at peace with the contradicting emotion.

Defining Sadness and Joy

Sadness (*atzvut*) is when we focus on what we are missing, and by contrast, joy (*simcha*) is about what we have. No one has everything, and no one is missing everything. One who feels *connected* to what he has is able to feel *simcha* - and someone who *connects* to that which he doesn't have will feel *atzvut*.

For example, many people have a lot, but they are not happy, because they are not connected to what they have; and conversely, many people have little, yet they are happy. Why? Because they don't allow themselves to become absorbed in the fact that they don't have certain things, and this spares them the pain that comes from agonizing over what they are missing. It essentially saves them from the sadness.

Deriving Vitality From Life - and Death

Both joy and sadness are forms of *chiyus* (vitality). The verse, “*And the living shall take to heart*”⁵⁰ shows us that even sadness can provide us with *chiyus*.

Of course, when one only know of sadness in his life and this is what he is mainly experiencing, he cannot survive this way. But if one is connected to both joy and sadness in his life, he can gain *chiyus* from each of these emotions.

How can a person gain *chiyus* from sadness? When one has pain and suffering, and he cries, he is calmed. He finds that he gets *chiyus* from this; he feels renewed. How indeed does crying give a person *chiyus*? Simply speaking, it is because he has released the pain, so he feels better now. This is certainly true. But the depth of this is because crying reveals the *chiyus* in the emotion of sadness. Crying can turn the normally debilitating emotion of sadness into a vitality-giving experience. (Tears are a form of water, and water nourishes and provides vitality.)

When we cry on *Tisha B’Av*, it seems that we are simply crying over what we are missing. But the depth is because this crying gives us *chiyus*.

One who is not connected to these words simply has a superficial perspective towards the Nine Days. The Nine Days to him are depressing; we can’t wear fresh clothing, we can’t eat meat, and it seems that all we have during these days is sadness and mourning. It does not feel vitality-giving at all – from a superficial perspective.

But when one lives and experiences the meaning of the destruction, he actually gains *chiyus* from the sadness of this time. The Sages said a rule, “A dead person cannot feel.” One who can “feel” has *chiyus* [and when one does not “feel”, it means that the person has no *chiyus* – he is “dead”]. When one truly *feels* what is missing, he experiences its loss, and along with this feeling of loss and pain comes a certain *chiyus* to him.

It is hard at first to understand this concept, but it is reality.

Experiencing Life Enables One To Experience Mourning

To give an example, if a child is *niftar* G-d forbid, the parents grieve, because they feel the loss; they are living and experiencing the situation. They are *connected* to what they are missing and thus they feel the sadness of it. But the three-year old child in the home doesn’t know what’s going on, so he doesn’t cry, because he is not *connected* to what is going on.

When one is already living the joy of life, he can also deeply mourn. When one knows what deep joy is – the fact that we can experience life – he can know what mourning is and he experiences it. But if one is not anyways in touch with the joy of life, he is not connected to his own life in the first place, so he will not be able to mourn either.

⁵⁰ Koheles 1:18

We are all alive, *Baruch Hashem*. But how many people have *simchas hachaim* (joy of life)? Most people are lacking *simchas chaim* – because they lack *chiyus* in their life. Not everyone is living their life! When one only has superficial joy in his life, he only has joy when he gets various new things, like a new house or a new suit. But true joy is to experience the fact that we are alive; to be happy with our very existence.

The very first time that *simcha*\joy is mentioned is with regards to the joy of Adam and Chavah's bond in Gan Eden; thus the joy between Adam and Chavah in Gan Eden represents the root lesson of the entire concept of *simcha*\joy. Adam said of her, "*This is bone of my bone.*" Chavah is also called "*mother of all living*". The connection is that being "alive" is when we recognize our existence and we are joyous from that alone – as opposed to deriving our main joy from things that we acquire.

Thus, when one is already joyous with his own life – when he appreciates the mere fact that he is alive – he will know how to be sad. Why? Because he experiences what life is, he experiences sadness at the loss of life.

When someone's parents die, understandably, he is sad. But why is he sad? Usually, it is because he misses the pleasant memories of his father or mother. He misses their smile or the jokes they would say, etc. But what about the fact that the life of this person's parent has ended? Does anyone have sadness over this when their parent dies...? The true feeling of sadness and mourning [over a parent's death] is to feel sad at the fact that his\her life has gone [not about how it relates to me personally].

Imagine a case where a little girl's father is *niftar*, G-d forbid, and her little daughter reacts to the news by saying, "Now there will be no one to buy me presents anymore!" The little child isn't feeling the actual loss. She is feeling a loss over something external, which certainly pains her, but she isn't feeling the actual loss of her father's life. Even when someone gets older and supposedly matures, and he\she loses a parent, the reaction is not that much different than a child's. The child is upset about the loss of the dependency in the relationship, not about the actual loss of life.

In order to know what sadness is, one must know what joy is, and in order to experience the sadness of mourning, one must know and appreciate what life is. When one experiences life, he can then have joy in life, and then when he encounters a loss of life, he experiences the sadness of this.

Realizing The Loss of The Beis HaMikdash

The Gemara says that it is better to go to a house of mourning than to a wedding, for it is written, "*And the living shall take to heart.*" A house of mourning is where they talk about the loss of life - and it is a place that gives a person even more *chiyus* than a joyous occasion. Thus, it is the loss of life which enables us to feel sadness.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was called "*beis chayeinu*", the "house of our life". When we lost the *Beis HaMikdash*, what did we lose? We lost many things, we lost much *siyata d'shamya*, but those were all just the branches of the loss. What we really lost was the essence of our life. We lost our very life

itself, for it was the source of all life. The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* that we mourn about is essentially to mourn the loss of our nation's source of life.

Appreciating Our Life

When one is happy with life, he can be happy in any situation. If one is not happy in every situation that comes his way, it is a sign that he is not happy with his very life.

In order to truly mourn, one has to be in touch with the depth of his life. Many people only feel this deep part of themselves when they encounter situations in which they feel like their lives are in danger, and then they appreciate what it is to be alive. But to our chagrin, this power in the soul is only accessed by such rare occurrences, and it is often not accessed on a more regular basis as it should be.

There were people in the world who were in a car accident and almost lost their lives, where they came to the point of realizing that nothing else matters as much as simply being alive. They become grateful to just be alive, and they truly felt that everything else in life is futile, for there is so much to be thankful for. Then, three days later, they are back to normal again, unchanged....

The ability to appreciate one's very life is an ability that we really need to be in touch with on a more regular basis, not only on rare occasions of our life. It is the one ability that enables us to experience our own life and to thereby know what true happiness: to be happy with the mere fact that we are alive. When one is in touch with this place in himself, he doesn't need anyone or anything else to make him happy. He gets it all from within himself, with just knowing and appreciating that he is alive.

The Loss of the Beis HaMikdash: The Loss of Life

When we had the *Beis HaMikdash*, the Sages say that one would feel the Shechinah there and be atoned for his sins. This was the meaning of how it was our "*beis chayeinu*". It put us in touch with our life. Thus, the Torah came forth from the *Beis HaMikdash*, "For from Zion comes forth the Torah, and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem", because Torah is called "*Toras Chaim*", "Torah of life". The Torah is the root of our life, thus it fittingly came from the *Beis HaMikdash* - the source of our life.

What did we lose when we lost the *Beis HaMikdash*? We lost the meaning of our life. All other things we lost were but branches of this. The root loss was the fact we lost our source of life. When mourning over the *Beis HaMikdash*, we must know what we are missing. Therefore, we must know what "life" is – so that we can know what an absence of life is. We must know what kind of a life we are missing, now that we are missing the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Rav Hutner said that in order to eulogize someone, he has to be on a higher spiritual level than him, in order to truly recognize whom he is talking about, so that he can feel that that he has a personal loss. How do we mourn the *Beis HaMikdash*, then, if we don't feel like something has gone missing from our own lives? In order to feel that we are missing it, we need to reflect into how it was the source of life to us, and then we will feel it as a personal loss - and then we will be able to mourn over it.

Vitality Through Crying

Now we can proceed to understand the following.

When one loses something he owned and he is upset over this, even if he cries over it, this act of crying doesn't come from a deep place in himself. It is over something external and that is why his crying is external. We know that there are different degrees of crying. Sometimes people cry a little and sometimes there are situations where we cry more. When do we cry more intensely? When we lose something that's more connected with our being. When we cry from the source of life in ourselves, it is deep crying, and such crying will give us life, because it a crying that is connected to our own life, so it is vitality-giving.

The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* meant that our source of *chiyus* left. The *Beis HaMikdash* provided us with *simcha*. If so, we lost our connection to life through *simcha*. But we can still become connected to the meaning of life, because there is another way. Now that the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, our connection to life is: through crying over its loss! But it is not just a mere superficial act of crying. It is a crying that connects us to life. Just as *simcha* connects us to our life, so can crying connect us to life. This is stated in the verse, "*And the living shall take to heart.*"

This is the depth of the mourning of the Nine Days. It is not merely mourning. If one simply views these days as days of mourning, he has a superficial perspective, and he gains no *chiyus* from these days; he'd prefer not to go through it. But if one connects to the source of the mourning, he can reveal the *chiyus* in it, and then he can really feel the mourning.

To illustrate, when one goes to a pay a *shiva* call, he can get inspired and gain new meaning towards his life. One who can't get *chiyus* from it just sees sad people there and he wishes he could leave. But when one knows how to get *chiyus*, he will deliberately go the *shiva* house. He knows he can get *chiyus* from there.

Getting 'Chiyus' From The Nine Days

The Nine Days are days that show a person where he can get *chiyus* from. It is a time that shows a person that there can be *chiyus* even from sadness. Without that *chiyus*, a person feels no connection to these days. But in order to be connected to it, as we said, one must be connected to life itself.

When one doesn't have *simchas chaim* he doesn't either know how to mourn. He has no *chiyus* in life, so why should he have *chiyus* when he thinks about death and mourning?

The Nine Days: Deriving Vitality From Death and Loss

The Sages revealed that *Tisha B'Av* is the day where Mashiach is born [after *chatzos*]. Here we will explain the depth behind this matter.

The times we live in today are a full realization of the curse of death upon mankind – there is a deathlike existence in the world today, and there is very little real life to be found amongst people. Most people aren't living life; they are living off various acquisitions of life. But as we explained here, there are two sources of life. There is a vitality-giving life that comes from joy, and there is vitality-giving a life that we can gain from sadness - which the Nine Days can serve to reveal to us.

The *sefarim hakodeshim* revealed that one can “pursue” Hashem during these days just as intensely as Jerusalem was “pursued” by her enemies on this day. There are two ways to search for Hashem and attain closeness with Him: the days of Tishrei are the beginning of Creation and are the root of life in Creation, thus it is the time of “*Seek Hashem where He is found*”; a different path in time that leads us to Hashem is the month of Av. Here we can reach Hashem even when there is no life: even when there is death and mourning. The *Beis HaMikdash* is destroyed, our main source of *chiyus* has gone, but we can still gain *chiyus* from this sadness, as we explained; and thereby become very close to Hashem.

What is this new kind of *chiyus* we can gain from Tisha B'Av? When one is alive, he can be happy from the fact that he's alive. Can a person be happy if he's dead? It is written, “*Serve Hashem with joy*”, which seems to imply that we can only be joyous as we serve Hashem when we are alive. But can a person be happy when he's about to die, and his soul will be given to Hashem? It would seem that death is not a time at all for any vitality or joy.

Yet, a person can be happy even as he's dying. He can realize that death is simply a removal of his body, where his soul will be going to a different room, as the *sefarim hakedoshim* describe. There is really no such thing as death! Death is merely a removal of garments. A person never really dies.

Death: The Revelation of Our Eternal Life

“The eternity of Yisrael does not lie.”⁵¹ There can be a *chiyus* (vitality) derived even from death! When there is *death*, there is no joy derived from *life* - but there can be *joy* derived from *death*. How? It is because death reveals to a person his eternal life, his real life, where he is only a soul with no body.

⁵¹ A statement of Rav Nachman of Bresslov

A superficial person lives only his actions alone. A deeper person lives his feelings, and a deeper person lives the reality of the knowledge in his thoughts. A deeper person can feel joy at the very fact that he is alive, and finally there is an even deeper level: a person can feel vitality even from the fact that he will die one day, because he knows that death will mean his eternal life. This deep level is the message behind the Nine Days: even the absence of life can provide us with vitality. Thus, a person can attain great closeness with Hashem during these days, in a palpable way.

‘Serving With Hashem With Joy’ In The Nine Days

When the Nine Days are viewed simply as sad days which provide us with no vitality, this would mean that it is impossible to serve Hashem with joy during these days. But we know that this can't be true, because the Nine Days are part of our *Avodas Hashem*, and all *Avodas Hashem* must be with *simcha*, for the rule is “*Serve Hashem with joy.*”

If we have no *Beis HaMikdash*, we can get *chiyus* from sadness, as we explained. And on a deeper level, we can get *chiyus* from thinking about the eternal life which awaits us, which is contained in the very idea of death and loss of life.

Connecting To Eternity

Recently, I was listening to a tape of a certain speaker whom I had a close relationship with, who was *niftar* recently. As I was listening to his words, I thought to myself: he is very much alive. I was thinking to myself: Did he die, or is he alive? He is very, very alive. A part of him has gone, but in essence, he is as alive as ever, as his words continue to talk to me on the tape. He has simply left this world and he has gone to another. But he is alive, not dead.

As a result of sin, where man was told “*On the day you eat from it, you shall surely die*”, and therefore man tends to think that he can have a death. This all comes from the perspective of sin. But the deeper perspective, which was before the sin, was that there is no such thing as death. This deep perspective is still in our soul. The *Beis HaMikdash*'s destruction showed us that there is really no such thing as a death to *Klal Yisrael*; our existence is forever.

Thus, we can now understand with greater depth how Yirmiyahu was thus able to write Eichah with joy, as he thought about destruction. How? Because there is a deep place in the soul which feels the unending joy of our existence. It is the G-dly light deep in the soul which connects man to the place of eternity.

This deep point is especially accessible on *Tisha B'Av*. The deep *chiyus* one can receive is when one realizes the Endlessness in our soul; the fact that we are connected to eternity. This is the deep source of joy that can be accessed on *Tisha B'Av*. This is not an intellectual fact, but a perspective of the soul. When one is connected to that place, he receives the true consolation over Jerusalem.

The Birth of Mashiach

The Three Weeks come to a climax on Tisha B'Av, and after *chatzos* (noon), we rise from the ground, because it is the time of the “birth of *Mashiach*”. The depth of this, in simple words, is that even as the fire of destruction is burning in front of us, we are still connected to our eternal life.

This is the depth of how a person can become close to Hashem during these days. But it can only happen if a person gains *chiyus* from his life, when he lives and experiences his feelings and thoughts, and he is happy with the very fact that he lives.

A person who lives with this perspective doesn't fear death; because there is no such thing as “death” to him. Death is the opposite of life; when a person knows he is always connected to an eternal life, there is no concept of death to him, thus he has no fear of death. He knows that he will always be alive. This is the meaning of what is written, “*May the soul of My Master be bound with the Rock of life.*”

The Depth of Our Consolation

This is our deep consolation. We say in the prayer of “*Nachem*” in *Shemoneh Esrei*, a prayer of consolation. What is the consolation about? Simply speaking, our consolation comes from the fact that in the future Hashem will rebuild the *Beis HaMikdash*. This is true, but it is deeper than that. The Sages say, “One who mourns over Jerusalem, will merit to see it in its rebuilding.” When one mourns properly over the *Beis HaMikdash*, he sees beyond death and destruction; he is connected to eternity. He gains *chiyus* from the mourning over it. But even more so, he realizes that our life is really endless and that there is no really no such thing as “death”.

It is for one to realize that the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash* didn't make us lose our G-dly spark. Our G-dly spark is eternal. This is the true consolation and merits one to have the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

The third *Beis HaMikdash* will come to the world to the general masses, but there is also a private *Beis HaMikdash* in one's soul.⁵² There are those who have built the first and second *Beis HaMikdash* in their souls, but sadly, it has been destroyed within themselves, just as the first and second *Beis HaMikdash* which were built and then destroyed. But there are those who have merited to build the third *Beis HaMikdash* in their souls, and it is a permanent achievement, just as the third *Beis HaMikdash* is eternal. These are the people of the world who have merited to have Hashem's presence dwell in their hearts. Once Hashem's presence is revealed in the heart, He is there forever.

Our deep consolation (which we can experience now already) is when we connect to the endless aspect of ourselves. Hashem is forever, He renews the Creation every moment, and one can be connected to that eternity and derive *chiyus* from this.

⁵² See *Nefesh HaChaim – Shaar Aleph*

The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed - but what was destroyed? In the words of the Sages, “Hashem poured out His wrath on sticks and stones”. Its structure is gone, but its inner light is forever. The holiness of the *Beis HaMikdash* still stands, according to some opinions in our Sages. The holiness of its stones is gone (and has the status of *chullin* \non-sacred property) because its stones have gone, but the holiness of the site remains intact forever, because its essence can never be destroyed.

The *avodah* of these days is thus two-fold. One part of our *avodah* is that we must connect to the meaning of the destruction, and we can even gain *chiyus* from this, as we explained. But we can also realize that the *Beis HaMikdash* is eternal; because the place of the *Beis HaMikdash* is forever holy. This is the deeper *chiyus* we can derive from these days, and this also connects us to the future redemption.

The words here are describing a place in the soul that one must strive to reach. They are describing an experience of life. There are chambers within our soul (“*chadrei halev*”) where we can go deeper and deeper into ourselves. There is true joy in the soul, and one can derive *chiyus* from there; and a person can even derive *chiyus* from the deep sadness of the soul over our current situation. If a person goes yet deeper, he can reach the point where he understands that even sadness and death are vitality-giving, for death represents our eternal life.

That is the deep point that can be reached through the mourning of *Tisha B’Av*.

What Do We Look Life After Tisha B’Av?

After *Tisha B’Av* is over, what does a person do? Most people go back to life as usual, just as they were living before the Three Weeks. Once it is *chatzos* on *Tisha B’Av*, it feels like the mourning is over; some people don’t go to a court case until Elul, to wait until the bad *mazal* of Av passes. But for the most part, people return to routine after *Tisha B’Av* ends....

But it is almost the month of *Elul*. The word “*Elul*” is equal in *gematria* (numerical value in the Hebrew language) to the word “*chaim*” (life). What kind of *chaim* do we have in Elul? It is a *chaim* that we can reach through the month of Av. The *chaim* we can receive in Av is to realize our eternal aspect.

In Elul, the books of life and death are open. It is a time of judgment. If we view death as merely the cessation of life, then there is much to fear, because it feels like death is looming over the horizon for us. But if we have realized in Av as we mourned that death is really a revelation of our eternal life, then we evade death, for we realize that our life is really endless. Only a good life awaits us.

This perspective is gained precisely through *Tisha B’Av*: the revelation of our eternal life, contained in the concept of death. For at the very climax of the destruction, *Mashiach* is born – the revelation of an eternal existence.

In Conclusion

May Hashem help us that these words become actualized in our own life, that our own personal souls should all feel these words, and that all of *Klal Yisrael* merit the rebuilding of the third *Beis HaMikdash*, speedily in our days, *Amen*.

15 | *Crying From Within on Tisha B'Av*⁵³

Introduction: Who Is The Redemption About?

At the end of the first *beracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei*, we say, “*l'maan shemo b'ahavah*” (*For the sake of His Name, with love*). We await the redemption, but besides, we await the kind of redemption which is “*for the sake of His Name*”. Hashem is **not** going to bring the redemption simply for the sake of His children. The reason He will bring the redemption is “*for the sake of His Name, with love*.”

During the Three Weeks, there is pain and mourning over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Yet, we also look forward to the redemption. This seems like a contradiction in our *Avodas Hashem*. How do we integrate these two aspects of our mission – how do we mourn, while at the same time being hopeful about the redemption?

Personal Suffering is not the same thing as National Suffering

When a person is in pain, he wants to get out of his predicament. He wants to be redeemed from his situation. This is not the same thing as the Redemption which the Jewish people will experience. Although the Redemption will also bring an end to all personal suffering, that is not the purpose of the Redemption. The purpose of the Redemption will be for Hashem's sake, as we say in *Shemoneh Esrei* – “*For the sake of His Name, with love*.” It will reveal Hashem's name in the world, which is the purpose of Creation.⁵⁴

The Root of Exile

What is the “Name” of Hashem? A name reveals the nature of something. In the gentile world, a name is meaningless, and names are just made up.⁵⁵ The name of a gentile does not define who he is. But the “Name” of Hashem, when it is revealed in the future, will reveal Hashem in the world.

Hashem will bring the Redemption “for the sake of His name.” This is because the entire purpose of Creation is to reveal Hashem. This is also the hidden purpose of our exiles and redemption from the

⁵³ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/bein-hamitzarim-021-tisha-bav-crying-within>

⁵⁴ *This is explained at length in sefer Daas Tevunos (of the Ramchal).*

⁵⁵ *Ran in Nedarim*

exiles. The word for exile in Hebrew is “*galus*”, which is rooted in the Hebrew word *giluy*, to reveal. Redemption is “*geulah*” in Hebrew, which is also rooted in the word *giluy*. This hints to the fact that both the exiles and the redemption will reveal Hashem.

Exile is a situation of Hashem’s concealment of His radiance toward us, (known as “*hester panim*”). Our situation today, in exile, is essentially a situation in which the revelation of Hashem is concealed from our minds and hearts. The redemption will be a revelation of Hashem into our minds and hearts, and it will be the time in which we will exclaim, “*This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him*”, and when we all exclaim, “*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu.*” Needless to say, the exiles we have endured and are currently enduring, have been rife with suffering and tragedy. Each of the exiles had their own nature and design, with unique forms of suffering. However, the sufferings of the exiles are just the branches of the exile. The root of the exile, though, is the *hester panim* – the fact that Hashem has concealed His radiance from us. The fact that Hashem isn’t revealed to us – **that** is the exile itself.

Chazal state that wherever the nation of Israel is exiled, the *Shechinah* (Hashem’s Presence) is exiled as well. This is because the real depth of the exile is the fact that the *Shechinah* has gone into exile. When the *Shechinah* returns – when Hashem will become revealed to us - the exile ends. All of the exiles – from Egypt until the present exile, which is Edom (Rome and all the nations that have branched out from it) together with *Yishmael* (the Arab nations) are actually only branches of exile. The root of all the exiles is the absence of Hashem’s radiance toward us.

Why Are We Crying?

Of course, we have to think about the suffering of the Jewish people, but this is not the point of exile. If a person is only thinking about the many sufferings and tragedies that exile has caused us, he is missing the point, because these are just the “branches” of the problem. The root of the problem, the root of all the exiles, is *hester panim*. Without being aware of this, a person just has the “branches” without the “root.” When we mourn and weep over the destruction, why are we crying? There is the external layer of crying, and then there is the internal layer of our crying. We cry on the outside, but it really comes from an internal kind of crying. When we cry over the suffering of exile,

it is only the external layer of the crying. The real, internal reason why we cry – the root of why we cry – is because of the *hester panim*.

What Do We Really Want?

Why do we also say *b’ahavah* (“with love”)? Why isn’t it enough to just say *l’maan shemo* (“for the sake of His Name”)?

The answer is because there are different kinds of *ahavah*, love. There is *ahavah rabbah* (“great love”) and there is *ahavas olam* (“eternal” love), but there is another kind of love greater than both of these: the *ahavah* which we mention in *Shemoneh Esrei*, which is “*l'maan shemo b'ahavah*.” What is this *ahavah*? It is a love that comes when the true *ratzon*, the will of Hashem, is revealed. Without the revelation of this *ratzon*, there is no love. The word for father in Hebrew is *av*, which is rooted in the word *ahavah*, love. *Ahavah* also means to “want”. This alludes to our Avos (forefathers) who wanted the true *ratzon* – the desire to do Hashem’s will, “*It is our will to do Your will.*”

The *ahavah* which we are saying in *Shemoneh Esrei*, “*l'maan shemo b'ahavah*”, is about the love that comes from the revelation of the very deepest *ratzon* there is. It is a revelation of “*retzoneinu laasos retzoncha*” – “It is our will to do Your will.” Exile is the opposite of this. There is no revelation of “*retzonenu laasos retzonca*” in exile. However, even in exile, there can still be a revelation of the desire to see Hashem – “It is our desire to see Our King” (“*retzonenu liros es malkeinu*”). We are able to reveal this *ratzon* in our exile – the desire to “see our King” - but the problem is that we aren’t even aware of what we want. Our *ratzon* isn’t revealed, and it is hidden from us. We have hope, though, because we can reveal it.

“*For Your salvation we await every day.*” This will be the redemption, which we await for. If this would be the true *ratzon* of people, the redemption would come. But our *ratzon* itself is in exile! There is *galus* on our very *ratzon* – in other words, what we really want is hidden from us. Since our *ratzon* is missing, there is no love either, because *ahavah* is revealed only when there is *ratzon*.

How To Reach The Real Crying

If we have a desire to “see Hashem”, though, then we will feel the internal kind of pain we are supposed to feel, and we will not just mourn superficially on the outside. To truly have pain over the exile, we have to truly want the redemption. When one uncovers a true desire for redemption, only then can he truly feel the pain over this exile. That is the true kind of weeping we need to have. If a person reaches this recognition within, his tears are true tears, and they will not just be fleeting moments of emotion.

Let us compare this to the following scenario. Imagine a person who goes to a wedding and he doesn’t know the person getting married. It’s very hard for him to make himself get excited and feel happiness at the wedding, because he doesn’t feel a love for the person getting married. It’s impossible for a person to just fall into the joy of dancing at a wedding and rejoicing the *chosson* (groom) if he doesn’t feel a love for the *chosson* (unless he has an unusual level of *Ahavas Yisrael*, love for Jews.) Here we can see how *ahavah* can only be present when there is *ratzon*; if a person has a love for a person (*ahavah*), he can awaken in himself an excitement for the person (*ratzon*), but if he doesn’t have a love for the person, he has no will to please him.

The same goes for feeling the pain over the destruction. You can't just fall into the *Avodah* of the Three Weeks/Nine Days. You have to feel the real pain that is going on, the internal kind of crying. How, indeed, can we feel the inner source of the crying?

The way we can do this is by clarifying to ourselves what we truly want. Even though a person learns Torah and does the *mitzvos*, that only shows what he's like on the outside. What does he truly want on the inside? What is a person's true *ratzon* in life...?

Hashem will bring the Redemption “*for the sake of His Name, with love.*” He has a will and a love for us – *ahavah* and *ratzon*. We need to connect ourselves to these *middos* of Hashem – the deepest *ratzon*; and to reveal it. The more we reveal our *ratzon* for the redemption, the deeper our salvation from this exile will be.

The Avodah of Tisha B'Av

What is the practical *Avodah* we need to do on Tisha B'Av?

Many people have a hard time with Tisha B'Av, because we are fasting, and it is also forbidden to learn Torah. People who want to utilize Tisha B'Av, at best, read different statements of Chazal in the *Gemara* about the destruction, and go to hear inspiring lectures. However, this alone is missing the point. All of this is just mourning in a superficial manner. What we need to do is to think about the inner ramifications of the destruction – the fact that we are missing the true *ratzon* in life. That is the real destruction, and this is what we mainly have to mourn about on Tisha B'Av. The destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the many tragedies that took place then, the suffering of all the exiles - these are just the external layer of the destruction, and to cry about this alone is just being superficial.

What we really need to mourn about is the destruction that took place within ourselves – the destruction to our *ratzon* of revealing Hashem onto the world. This is what we should cry about.

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The End of Shemoneh Esrei: Praying For Peace

וטוב יהי לברכנו ולברך את כל עמך ישראל בכל עת ובכל שעה בשלומיך, ברוב עוז ושלום,
ברוך אתה ה', המברך את עמו ישראל בשלום

The conclusion of the *Sim Shalom* blessing, and the end of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, concludes with the words, “And may be it good to bless us, and to bless all of Your nation Yisrael, at every time and every moment, with Your peace, with much abundance of splendor and peace; Blessed are You, Hashem, Who blesses His nation Yisrael in peace.”

The beginning of the blessing was about *shalom* (peace), and the end of the blessing is also about *shalom*/peace. The blessing of the *Kohanim*, which immediately precedes *Sim Shalom*, is also a blessing for peace. The very last words of *Shemoneh Esrei* are also about peace: “He Who makes peace in His high abode, will make peace upon us.”

Peace and The Beis HaMikdash

Concerning the Nine Days we are in, where we mourn the destruction of both the first and second *Beis HaMikdash* - the *Gemara*⁵⁷ states that at a time when there is peace, there is joy in Yisrael, and the fast of the “fourth and fifth month” (the fasts of the 17th of *Tamuz* and *Tisha B’Av*) will be turned into joy and festivity. The mourning and sadness of the Nine Days is only an expression of its external layer. The inner essence of these days is the *avodah* upon us to transform them into days of joy. *Rashi*⁵⁸ says that when there will be a time of peace, when the nations of the world are not attacking the Jewish people, these days will be transformed from days of mourning and sadness to days of *simcha*.

“*Yerushalayim*” is rooted in the words “*yarei shalem*” (awe of perfection/completion), which is also rooted in the word “*shalom*”. The Jewish people are called “*Shulamis*”, which is also from the word “*shalom*”. The first *Beis HaMikdash* was built by Shlomo, whose name is also from the word “*shalom*”. The Sages state that Shlomo is called so because he was like “the King whom peace belongs to.” The Sages also state that in the time that King Chizkiyahu lived, the *Beis HaMikdash* could not be destroyed, because it was a time of *shalom*.

Thus, it is *shalom* that upkeeps the *Beis HaMikdash*. Its root began with *shalom* (“Shlomo/*shalom*”), and it was kept existent through *shalom*. Chazal say that *sinas chinam* (baseless

⁵⁶ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-170-praying-peace>

⁵⁷ *Rosh HaShanah 18b*

⁵⁸ *ibid*

hatred) destroyed the second *Beis HaMikdash*,⁵⁹ and this is all stemming from a lack of *shalom*. The sin of *lashon hora*, which is very rampant in our times, is entirely an offshoot of *sinas chinam*⁶⁰, and the *sinas chinam* is rooted in the absence of *shalom* in our times.

The Two Roots of Strife

There is a *Midrash* that before Hashem create the word, *shalom* (peace) requested that the world not be created, for the world is entirely a place of strife and dissension.

Why, indeed, is there so much *machlokes* (strife) in the world? There are two main obstacles that prevent *shalom*.

One obstacle is “*chilukei de’os*”, difference of opinions. Two people think differently and they can get into an argument about something. This kind of argument is rooted in the “*de’os*”, the opinions and beliefs, which are located in our brain. They are more intellectual arguments in their nature.

Another root of arguing and strife stems from the various unfixed *middos* (character traits) that are present in our heart.

Mental Bribery

Most of the strife rampant in today’s times are stemming from the second reason: a lack of refined *middos*. The Sages state that in Heaven, there is no strife, for there is no jealousy or any other negative character traits amongst the angels. This implies that it is negative *middos* which are the source of strife; therefore, we, who live on this world, are affected by strife, for we do have a struggle with negative *middos*.

Many people get into arguments simply because they have a degree of low self-worth about themselves. But there are also many arguments which break out due to various *middos* that lay dormant in the heart, which end up bribing the brain’s thoughts and thereby form various beliefs, which eventually lead to entering into arguments and dissension with others.

There is a concept of bribery in our own psyche (*shochad*). The Torah forbids giving any form of *shochad* (bribery) to a judge; once a judge takes the bribe, even if he is very wise, his brain becomes a bit warped, and it sways him from thinking honestly. Just like there can be monetary bribery, so can there be ‘mental’ bribery. One might have jealousy or hatred or in his heart for someone, and this can sway his mind, causing him to adapt certain beliefs and to allow himself to fight with others.

So the justification for entering into an argument with another is usually stemming from something unrefined in one’s heart, which passes into his brain, where the brain’s thoughts develop

⁵⁹ *Yoma 9b*

⁶⁰ (Editor’s Note: See *Sefer Chofetz Chaim – Hakdamah*)

new thought patterns that follow these newly formed “*de’os*” (beliefs). One then comes up with all kinds of seemingly “logical” arguments against others as his many “*de’os*” are formed. All of these *de’os* are not actual *de’os*; rather, they are stemming from a bribed psyche, from unrefined *middos* that lurk in the heart.

Most of the strife and fights that go on today (both in the outside world as well as within our own sheltered society) are not stemming from a difference in *de’os*, but rather from unrefined *middos*.

There is a big difference, however, between the kinds of arguments that break out within the Jewish people, with the arguments that take place amongst members of other nations of the world. Those who are not of the souls of the Jewish people don’t care at all about having good *middos*, so they see no problem in getting into strife with others. The souls of the Jewish people (all except for the ‘*Erev Rav*’), by contrast, are in essence pure, and therefore we have the Divine gift implanted in us from Hashem to be able to fix and purify our *middos*. This applies to every single Jewish soul (except for the *Erev Rav*).

It is just that sometimes, there is a little bit of jealousy or some other bad *middah* that remains unfixed in the external layer of a Jew’s soul, and this can cause inner bribery to his psyche, which leads him to form various erroneous beliefs and thereby justify getting into fights with others.

Difference of Opinion

A second root of strife stems from a problem in the very *de’os*. This is less common than the above-mentioned reason discussed until now, and it is almost always never the reason that motivates people to enter into *machlokes*, because as we explained, it is usually unrefined *middos* that cause a person to enter into *machlokes*. But we will discuss it here anyway, so that we can have a fuller picture of this topic.

If one gets into an argument due to a difference in *de’os*, the argument can only be conducted properly if it stays at the level of *de’os* and doesn’t become personal. Such an argument is the kind of argument which the Sages describe as an “argument for the sake of Heaven”, which can be effective. However, even when this is the case, it often ends up becoming personal.

The *Gemara*⁶¹ says that normally, the mitzvah to help another unload his donkey takes precedence to the mitzvah of helping another load the donkey, because unloading the donkey alleviates the donkey from *tzaar baalei chaim*. However, the *Gemara* says that if one sees his friend about to unload his donkey, and he also sees his enemy about to load his donkey, he should go help the enemy first, so that he can overcome his natural will.

Tosafos asks: What kind of enemy are we talking about? We aren’t talking about a person whom a person simply hates, because this is prohibited. *Tosafos* answers that we are speaking about an “enemy” that one is permitted to hate, such as a person who sins deliberately in public and he

⁶¹ *Pesachim 113a*

doesn't accept rebuke. But *Tosafos* asks, if this is an enemy whom we have a *mitzvah* to hate, why must a person overcome his hatred towards him? *Tosafos* answers because although the person hated him originally because there was a *mitzvah* to hate him, by now it has become personal hatred. Therefore, there is a *mitzvah* upon the person to overcome this natural hatred that has developed, and deliberately help the enemy.

In other words, the hatred has spread past his *de'os* and it has by now entered the realm of his *middos*. In this case it was a *mitzvah* to hate the person, yet even a motivation that stems from a *mitzvah* can turn into a bad *middah*.

This shows us the depth that is behind strife, fighting, and war. Most of the arguments in the world are due to a problem in the *middos*, not in the *de'os*. Very few arguments are due to a difference of *de'os*. Even when the argument originally stems from a difference in *de'os*, it usually bribes the mind's thinking patterns, and then it simply becomes bad *middos*.

Thus, we can now understand the depth of the *Midrash* that peace requested of Hashem that the world not be created, for the world is entirely strife.

Checking Your Motivations

Anyone who finds himself getting involved in a fight or argument with others needs to clarify: Is this an argument stemming from my *de'os* (beliefs), or is it perhaps an issue of *middos*? Usually, upon some reflection, a person can discover that it was a lack of refined *middos* which prompted him to get into a heated argument with others, and not simply his *de'os*. After all, who can say he is so pure that all of his arguments with others are entirely due to *de'os* and not to his *middos*....?

When a person allows himself to stay in a *machlokes* and keep passionately to his beliefs as argues with others, this usually causes a person to lose both this world and the next; like what happened with Korach and his assembly, who lost everything, because they couldn't leave the *machlokes*.

Only a very great and purified person can enter a *machlokes* and retain his good *middos*. Ordinary people are not strong enough in their souls to be unaffected by *machlokes*. Even when a *Gadol* has to be involved in a *machlokes*, he keeps checking himself to see if it's affecting his *middos*; he doesn't stop suspecting himself of ulterior motives.

A truthful person keeps suspecting himself of his motives. Even if he knows that his opinion was right, he suspects that perhaps by now it is becoming more personal.

Hashem knows what's going on in each person's heart when he argues with others. There is almost no one in the generation who is fitting to enter a *machlokes* without getting affected by bad *middos* along the way, therefore, it is forbidden for anyone to enter a *machlokes*!

The deeper and more truthful a person is, he is aware of the subconscious motives, and surely his conscious motives. If one discovers that his bad *middos* are fueling his desire for *machlokes*, he must

step back from the *machlokes*. When one realizes what we are saying here, he runs from *machlokes* as if it's a fire. This is no exaggeration; it is reality to anyone who realizes this.

There is almost no one in the generation who can fight purely for the sake of Heaven. Although we see a lot of misguided hotheads who don't listen to these rules, that doesn't make it right. One must realize that *machlokes* is a total contradiction to our pure essence. Since most of us do not know if the desire to enter the *machlokes* is stemming from *de'os* or *middos*, we must assume that it stems from bad *middos*, and thus stay away totally from the *machlokes*.

Even if we have to choose sides in a *machlokes*, that should only be in the actions we do. We have no choice when it comes to this part; we have to act like one of the sides. But even when this is the case, in our own heart, we need to feel separate from the entire *machlokes* and that we have absolutely no connection to it.

And even if a person enters a *machlokes* to a difference of *de'os* (which it is almost never the case, as we explained), he must suspect himself that it has festered and that it has become bad *middos*, unless he is on the level of Dovid *HaMelech* who said “*My heart is emptied from within me.*” Even if it is a *machlokes* towards a wicked person whom it is a *mitzvah* to hate (which is not such a simple matter in our times), if the *machlokes* is allowed to simmer and fester, it eventually becomes bad *middos*. What started out as a difference of opinion becomes strife and hatred.

If one who is totally clear that his differences with another comes from *de'os* and he is very afraid that it will lead to bad *middos* and he makes sure to keep checking his motivations, he is one who fears Heaven, and he is the kind of person who can maybe survive a *machlokes* and remain unscathed. Anyone who is not like this should stay away from *machlokes*, and that is the case with most people in the world.

Increasing Our Love For The Jewish People

It doesn't matter what kind of Jew we are dealing with and which type of community he comes from and what his background is: we must make sure we don't allow ourselves to enter strife.

Don't enter a communal *machlokes*, and stay away from even private *machlokes*. Always suspect yourself of bad *middos* motivating you. It takes much wisdom and prayer to enter a *machlokes* and come out unaffected. Even if staying away from *machlokes* will make you lose money or your status or your honor, be prepared to lose it, rather than enter a *machlokes* and lose both worlds.

Instead, awaken your *ahavas Yisrael* (love of the Jewish people) towards every Jewish soul. Don't only love Jews in your community, who represent your beliefs and whom you see eye-to-eye with. Rather, you must love every single Jew, without exception, whether it is a truthful Jew or a misguided Jew, whether it is an observant Jew or whether he is off the *derech*, or whether he's half-*frum* or three-quarters *frum* or a quarter-*frum* or whether he's totally far from our *derech*. Whether you agree with him or whether you don't agree with him, love him in your heart.

If one can do that, he can survive this generation, and if not, he will almost definitely lose both this world and the next. In today's times, strife is filling every place in the world; it affects every community and every corner, G-d forbid. Therefore, we must keep awakening *ahavas Yisrael* towards all other Jews, even towards those who are on a totally different side than yours.

Make sure that you never fall into the pit of bad *middos*. Keep remembering the words of our Sages that peace didn't want the world to be created due to all its strife. The world we live in is an *alma d'piruda*, a "world of disparity", and in the End of Days which we are in, where we at the end of the end, the *pirud* (disparity) grows more and more⁶². We are very dispersed amongst our own people; and there is disparity amongst us, in every sect of Judaism and in every corner (may G-d have mercy on us).⁶³

When one lives likes this – when he makes sure to keep awakening *Ahavas Yisrael* towards all Jews and he is making sure to stay away from all traces of strife - he is one who can ask Hashem to bless us with peace at all times, as we say here in the end of the blessing of *Sim Shalom*, *בכל עת ובכל שעה בשלומיך*.

There is strife in our world every moment, everywhere, from in front and from behind us, and that is why we pray to Hashem specially that there be peace at all times and at all moments. Thus we need to keep running away from strife more than ever, and to instead keep awakening our love for all Jews.⁶⁴

In Conclusion

When all of the Jewish people will touch upon this point, this will be the peace that comes to the world, and it will be fully realized how "*Torah scholars increase peace in the world*".⁶⁵ Then we will see, speedily in our days, the time where Hashem will bring peace upon us. There will be peace at last in *Yerushalayim*, and then we will merit the rebuilding of the final and complete *Beis HaMikdash*.

Amen, Amen, and Amen.

⁶² See *Fixing Your Wind_020_The Desire For Competition*

⁶³ Refer to *Purim_067_Achashveirosh and Haman*

⁶⁴ See *Getting To Know Your People_05_How To Hate Evil and Aspire For Unity*

⁶⁵ *Berachos 64a*