This edition is dedicated to our beloved grandparents, of blessed memory, Shimon & Annette Perez and Louis & Minnie Gecelter who together blazed the trail of Aliyah and love of Israel for our family Avi, Doron and Ilan Perez and Ariela Shpigel.
HaMizrachi seeks to spread Torat Eretz Yisrael throughout the world. HaMizrachi also contains articles, opinion pieces and advertisements that represent the diversity of views and interests in our communities. These do not necessarily reflect any official position of Mizrachi or its branches.

If you don't want to keep HaMizrachi, you can double-wrap it before disposal, or place it directly into shemitos.

HaMizrachi Dedication Opportunities

If you would like to dedicate an issue of HaMizrachi in memory of a loved one or in celebration of a simcha, please send an email to production@mizrachi.org

GLOBAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Two Temples, Two Goals
Chief Rabbi David Lau

The Beit HaMikdash as the Center of Limmud HaTorah
Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Seven Principles for Maintaining Jewish Peoplehood
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

The Power of Hope
Chief Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein

AM, ERETZ, TORAH

RELIGIOUS ZIONIST LEADERS
Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel

PLACES IN ISRAEL
Jerusalem: Past and Future
Rivi Frankel

RAV KOOK’S TEACHINGS
Teachers Armed with Spiritual Might
Rabbi Chanan Morrison

ISRAEL INSIGHT
Media Bias Against Israel
Daniel S. Mariashchin

WHAT’S IN A WORD
Tzom and Ta’anit
David Curwin

TISHA B’AV READING

Mourning in a Rebuilt Jerusalem
Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel

The Most Important Relationship
Rabbi Andrew Shaw

The Relevance of Tisha B’Av
Rabbi Berel Wein

The Secret of Consistency
Rabbi Shalom Rosner

Encountering Eicha
Rabbi Stewart Weiss

What is Tisha B’Av?
Rabbi Ari Posner

SPECIAL FEATURE
Crying and Yearning

GENERAL INTEREST

PARENTING
The Importance of Perspective Taking
Dr. David Pelcovitz

RELATIONSHIPS
Respect First, Love Second
Rabbi Ben Zion Shafier

Understanding Suffering
Rabbi Dov Lipman

The Preacher who Taught Me How to Mourn for the Temple
Judy Waldman

Torah as the Totality of G-d’s Will
Rabbi Zev Leff

Tisha B’Av Crossword
How is it possible to be genuinely kind to someone and to hate them at the same time?

Remarkably, this is what the Talmud seems to say regarding the spiritual cause of the destruction of the Second Temple:

“During the Second Temple period, the people occupied themselves with Torah, Mitzvot and lovingkindness. Why was the Temple destroyed? Because they acted with Sinat Chinam – senseless hatred.”

How is this possible?

The Netziv suggests an answer: The people being hated were not the same ones being showered with lovingkindness: “As a result of the senseless hatred in their hearts that one harbored for the other, they suspected all those who did not follow their path as a G-d-fearing Jew of being a Sadducee and a heretic.”

If you were part of my community of believers and followed my customs you were accepted, but if not, you were rejected.

Sectarianism reigned supreme prior to the destruction. There were many distinct sects – Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots and Sicarri – and more factions within these sects. If you were part of my faction, specific ideological group and community, you were worthy of endless kindness. But if you were part of another sect whose values and beliefs threatened mine, you were scorned and hated. There was no middle road. Only black and white. Either you’re ideologically with me or against me.

Thus the hatred and infighting in Jerusalem were so disastrous on the eve of destruction that Josephus describes the society as “a great body torn in pieces.”

How do disagreements deteriorate into such deep hatred?

In the War Scroll, found near the Dead Sea in the caves of Qumran, we can perhaps detect an answer. The text – probably written by the Essenes – describes its followers as “the sons of light” and all others (including fellow Jews) as “the sons of darkness.”

This changes the rules of discourse.

We are no longer debating views or ideas. We are delegitimizing the other as a person. It is no longer about perspectives but about the person – vicious ad hominem attacks. It’s no longer about right and wrong, but about you and me. All who think and act like me are ‘good’ and bring spiritual light and morality to the world and all who disagree are ‘bad’ and immoral, invoking spiritual darkness. When I am absolutely right and you are absolutely wrong; when the other is totally disqualified and seen as part of ‘the dark side,’ we are treading dangerously close to the abyss of senseless hatred.

How blessed we are to have a renewed Jewish society in Israel. We face many challenges here and around the world as to how best chart the way forward. These issues are often extremely divisive because they touch the very essence of Jewish life and destiny. This is particularly true during the prolonged election period in Israel. Respectful democratic discourse often descends into sharp divisiveness, delegitimization and demonization.

The Torah hints to the cure of this destructive phenomenon when it tells us that Aharon the High Priest passed away on Rosh Chodesh Av, the first day of the month of Av.

At the onset of what would become the most tragic time in Jewish history – the first nine days of the month of Av culminating in Tisha B’Av – we are charged to recall Aharon’s life and legacy. More than anyone else in our history, he was the national peacemaker, always doing everything he could to create peace and harmony between fellow Jews, despite salient differences and painful personal disputes.

At this time of year when we reflect on what the Sages tell us is the spiritual cause of the destruction of the Temple – senseless hatred – we should evoke Aharon’s memory and aim to strive for its cure.

1 Yoma 9b.
2 Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, HaEmek Davar, introduction to the book of Genesis.
3 The Jewish War, Book 5:1.
4 Interestingly, this is the only Yahrzeit date mentioned explicitly in the Torah - that Aharon died on the first day of the 5th month (Bamidbar 33:38). Remarkably, this appears in Parashat Masei which is read every year around Rosh Chodesh Av.
5 Avot DeRabbi Natan 12.

Rabbi Doron Perez is Chief Executive of the Mizrachi World Movement
Why does the Churban HaBayit play such a central role in Judaism? If one examines the words of the Rambam when he explains the underlying reason for engaging in fasts, one is immediately struck by how critical the loss of the Beit HaMikdash is to all our ta’aniot. While Yom Kippur and Ta’anit Esther are obviously in their own categories, all the other fasts are linked to this event. Clearly the destruction of G-d’s home is calamitous, but considering our history is replete with many other tragedies, why does it play such an outsized role?

Before answering this question, let us raise a few interesting queries and see if indeed one principle can address all our concerns. The Gemara in Bava Batra (60b) describes the Jewish people’s response after the churban and it is powerfully evocative of the sentiments expressed by some survivors after the Holocaust. They did not wish to eat or drink, and there was an incredible sense of despondency at what had been lost. Once again, a deeper explanation is required; why did the loss of the Mikdash elicit such a poignant reaction?

When the Talmud Bavli examines the sins that led to the destruction of the Bayit Rishon, two very different rationales are offered. In Yoma (9b), the Gemara describes how Am Yisrael engaged in the most heinous of sins (such as murder) while in Nedarim (81a) we are told the churban was brought about by the nation’s failure to say Birkat HaTorah before engaging in Torah study. Which one is correct and how can the latter offense be the cause of the Mikdash being destroyed?

The Rambam, in his commentary on the Mishna (on Masechet Rosh Hashanah), makes a bold statement regarding the observance of Tisha B’Av during the time of the second Beit HaMikdash. He asserts that even though they were performing the avodah in the Mikdash, the people still fasted on the ninth of Av. This is puzzling. If the fast is due to the Churban HaBayit, how can it be observed while the second Beit HaMikdash is functioning?

Finally, we may pose one last fundamental question and ask – why is there a need for a Mikdash at all? Does G-d really need a home, does not the Mishna in Pirkei Avot (3:2) state that the Shechina is present when two people study Torah together?

Perhaps the solution to all our problems is as follows: there is a vast difference in letting G-d into our lives and our entering into His Home. It is true we have the capacity to bring the Divine presence into our midst even by learning Torah with a chavruta, but the fullness of that relationship can only be expressed when G-d is totally revealed, and that occurred when we had the privilege of the Mikdash.

During the period of the first Beit HaMikdash, one could offer a korban and receive a direct response. Miracles could be witnessed daily. This enabled an incredibly unique relationship with our Creator and as such, its loss was devastating. That is why the people reacted with a profound sense of despondency; they accurately recognized that this bond was not easily duplicated and that their connection to G-d had been severed.

When the second Beit HaMikdash was built, there was some consolation but the gaps in the relationship remained. There was no Aron or Urim VeTumim (to name just two discrepancies) and so the people still observed Tisha B’Av for that which had been lost and not been restored. They still had ample reason to mourn.

Finally, we may now explain the enigmatic passage in Nedarim that attributes the churban to the failure to say Birkat HaTorah. They had become complacent. They took the relationship they had with HaKadosh Baruch Hu for granted and therefore did not heed the admonitions of the great prophets. Eventually, they behaved badly, but their initial downfall was a lack of appreciation for the direct connection they enjoyed.

We live in an era in which we are privileged to reside in our homeland once again – in Medinat Yisrael. We are fortunate that Yerushalayim is ours and that the Kotel is in our hands. However, it is only when the Third Beit HaMikdash is built that our relationship with G-d will truly be complete.

Rabbi Binyamin Blau is on the Jewish National Rabbinic Advisory Board of Religious Zionists of America-Mizrachi
Which number will you be?

12,253

You can already sign up to receive your hard copy of HaMizrachi for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur at mizrachi.org/hamizrachi/hardcopy

Due to Covid-19, the number of copies printed will be determined by the number of sign-ups. To ensure your copy, sign up today!

HaMizrachi will be distributed to local pick-up points based on sign-up.
Channeling Loneliness

Eicha Yashva Badad

Megillat Eicha opens by expressing surprise at Yerushalayim’s and the Jewish people’s loneliness and isolation. This loneliness is the central theme of the entire first perek, which describes how the city once full of people has become like a widow (1:1), all her friends have betrayed her and become her enemies (1:2, 19), and she has become like a nida (1:8). The perek emphasizes four times (1:2, 9, 16, 21) that no one cares enough to even offer consolation. It is this that Yirmiya cries for – לע על אהל contro 바זכא ייני – והות האדמא לא טוב אשקא עין אשקא עין

Loneliness in the Torah

The difficulty of loneliness is already described by the Torah. Moshe references it in the words אשקא אשקא הנדר (Devarim 1:12). The burden of Jewish leadership is difficult; carrying it alone is unbearable. In fact, Hashem identifies loneliness as what makes Man incomplete as single1 – לא טוב את האדמא בדד. When we are alone is also when we are most vulnerable. The Torah emphasizes that Ya’akov Avinu was attacked when he was alone2 – יוהיה יפקד הנדר מרארי אשקא עין.

Am Levadad Yishkon

All this having been said, being alone is not always a bad thing. Bilam’s blessings include a description3 of the Jewish People as עם נדלר ישן – עם נדלר ישן – a blessing because our separation from other nations helps focus on our relationship with Hashem.4 Loneliness makes real relationships possible. Love builds off two people’s loneliness and crystallizes into marriage when the two commit to one another to the exclusion of all others. Similarly, a meaningful relationship with Hashem hinges on people feeling lonely without Him. Dveikut with another is only possible when one feels for no one else.

These kinds of relationships help people find true and meaningful support and strength. Ya’akov Avinu’s relationship with Hashem helped him vanquish the mysterious איש and we5 – his descendants – learn from him how to find similar celestially-inspired strength6 – ושבעה הוא הנביא לברך. When we live this way, we and Hashem share a mutually exclusive relationship – alone with each other. This relationship, described in Shirat Ha’azinu7 as יד ודבק בין אני לך יד and we8 – יד ודבק בין אני לך יד allows for true security9 10 – ישאר אני ואת המדד.

The Eicha Call to Hashem

Appreciating this, Megillat Eicha channels its sense of loneliness towards a relationship with Hashem. Perek Alephei ends with a call to Hashem – “I called for my lovers but they deceived me… See Hashem for I am in distress… There is none to comfort me” (1:19-21).

Perek Bet emphasizes that Hashem is the One who has brought the suffering. It is His way of calling us to turn to Him. “Hashem has done that which He devised. He has fulfilled His word that He commanded in days of old. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water opposite Hashem’s face…” (2:17-19).

The pivotal, personal Perek Gimmel recognizes that Hashem has isolated us from the rest of the world to focus us on our relationship with Him. Suffering can sometimes be good and helpful for one who needs to be alone to reflect and appreciate the relationships he or she has abused (3:27-28). This reflection leads to a return to Hashem later in the perek – “Let us search and try our ways and turn back to Hashem. Let us lift up our heart with our hands to G-d in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled…” (3:40-42)

Am Yisrael has gotten the message. Hashem orchestrated the mass betrayal and isolation so we would appreciate the need to turn and return to Him.

Tisha B’Av 5780

Even with our return to Israel and the building of our own State, we remain isolated and lonely. This year, that loneliness is reinforced by the Corona-forced separation from one another. May we learn to internalize the message of this loneliness and channel it towards a turn and return to Hashem asking Him to return us to Him. May our doing so merit His response.

1 Bereishit 2:18.
2 Ibid 32:25.
4 See HaEmek Davar about the importance of Jews retaining their unique distinct identity and not assimilating.
6 See Rashi Bamidbar 23:9 based on the targumim.
7 See Bereishit Rabbah 77:1.
8 Devarim 32:12.
10 With the relationship with Hashem available to all of us at all times, no Jew is ever alone

Rabbi Reuven Taragin is Educational Director of Mizrachi and Dean of the Yeshivat HaKotel Overseas Program
This is what the L-rd says:
“A voice is heard in Ramah, Mourning and great weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children
Refusing to be comforted,
Because her children are no more.

This is what the L-rd says:
Restrain your voice from weeping,
And your eyes from tears,
For your work will be rewar ded, says the L-rd.
They will return from the land of the enemy.
So there is hope for your future, declares the L-rd,
Your children will return to their own Land.”
(Yirmiyahu 31:14–16)

This beautiful prophecy of consolation is presented as a dialogue between G-d and Rachel. In response to the cries of Rachel (a voice weeping), G-d answers – “Restrain your voice from weeping,” and in response to “Because her children are no more,” G-d assures Rachel: “Your work will be rewarded... there is hope for your future.” The only source of consolation for Rachel is the assurance of survival and the return of her children to their Land.

But why does Yirmiyahu particularly depict Rachel as crying for her children at a time of exile to express the tearful longings of our national ancestors?

As we examine the verses carefully, we note numerous references to the story of Rachel’s son, Yosef, who was also exiled from his family and his homeland. Rachel refuses to be consoled for “her children (plural) who is (singular) no more,” which is reminiscent of the word נמספר (is no more), mentioned seven times in the Yosef narrative and referring consistently to Yosef and Binyamin, the children of Rachel.

Furthermore, the exact terminology of this prophecy resonates with Ya’akov’s response to the disappearance of Yosef: “Ya’akov rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned his son for a long time. His sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He said, ‘I will go down to the grave mourning for my son’ (Bereishit 37:34–35).

Yirmiyahu intentionally weaves the loss of Yosef to his father with the loss of Yosef, the firstborn of Rachel, to his mother, both of whom may not be consoled! The Midrash connects these narratives and explains the refusal to be consoled: “One can be comforted for one who is dead, but not for one who is still living.” Ya’akov refused to be comforted because he had not yet given up hope that Yosef was still alive.

Yirmiyahu reminds us that just as the tears of Yosef’s father attested to his survival and ultimate reunion, so too, the tears of Yosef’s mother, refusing to be comforted, refusing to give up hope, will assure the return of Yosef’s descendants, the people of Israel.

Rachel’s tears remind us of Ya’akov’s tears of the past – a father’s loss over his beloved child, and direct us for the future. Rachel’s tears teach us never to be consoled, and never to give up hope for what is most precious to us. Rav Chanan Porat explains that Rachel’s tears are therefore described as a “פעולה – a creative and functional action, a constant, restless state for fathers and mothers seeking the return of their beloved children to their Land!

Just as Ya’akov was eventually reunited with Yosef, and Rachel’s children did return to Eretz Yisrael, we have returned too. However, our Father in Heaven is still crying (see Berachot 3a) for the loss of His children and banishment from His home, hopeful for return to the Beit HaMikdash. Yirmiyahu continues his prophecy, employing parallel terminology:

“...and I shall be returned, for You are the L-rd my G-d... Surely after that, I was returned, I repented... I was ashamed, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth... Is Ephraim a darling son to Me? Is he a child that is dandled? For as often as I speak of him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns for him, I will surely have compassion upon him, said the L-rd” (Yirmiyahu 31:17-19).

Yirmiyahu teaches us that it is not enough to remember the cries of Rachel and Ya’akov, the merits of our patriarchs and matriarchs, their lack of consolation that will inspire and direct us to return to the Land. There is another return of children to parents – a repentance we must initiate... and only the two actions combined will assure the return to our Father’s Home.
In Tanach, we do not find fasting as an expression of sorrow, but rather as preparation and sanctification to receive G-d’s revelation. We see examples of this when Moshe received the Torah, Eliyahu stood at Mount Chorev, the purification process on Yom Kippur. Fasting is also an integral part of praying and beseeching G-d – as seen with Shaul in his war against the Philistines and David who fasted and prayed before his infant son passed away.

In light of this understanding of fasting, how are we to interpret the meaning of the fast days commemorating the destruction of the Temple?

The Four Fasts in Tanach

Firstly, it does not mention anywhere in Tanach that the four fasts were instituted because of the destruction. Rather, only Zechariah mentions them, and only in terms of fasts that will become festivals:

“So said the L-rd of Hosts: The fast of the fourth (month – Tammuz), the fast of the fifth (month – Av), the fast of the seventh (month – Tishrei), and the fast of the tenth (month – Tevet), shall be for the house of Judah for joy and happiness, and for happy festivals – you shall love truth and peace.” (Zechariah 8:19)

Simply put, it would seem that the fast days over the destruction of the Temple express mourning, both in that we follow all the customs of mourning on those days (at least on Tisha B’Av); and because Zechariah prophesied that in the future final redemption, these fast days will become days of rejoicing. We understand this to mean that when the sorrow and pain end, there will be no more need for fasts.

Surprisingly though, we find that even when the Second Temple stood, the people continued to fast on Tisha B’Av for the destruction of the First Temple. Indeed, they even turned to the prophets and Kohanim questioning this (while they were building the Temple):

“And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Darius, the word of G-d came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, in Kislev. And Saretzer and Regem Melech and his men sent a message to Beit El to pray before G-d; and to ask the Kohanim of the Temple of G-d, the L-rd of Hosts, and the prophets, saying, ‘Shall I weep in the fifth month, abstaining from all pleasure, as I have done these many years?’” (Zechariah 7:1-3)

The prophet’s response was that the fast and its laws are not the main point, but rather a reminder to the people to fix their ways. The prophet made it clear that we are not fasting over the pain of the destruction itself, but for the reasons that caused the destruction.

Therefore, the Rambam writes (Ta’aniot 5:1):

“There are days when the entire Jewish people fast because of the calamities that occurred to them then, to arouse their hearts and awaken within them the paths of repentance. This will serve as a reminder of our wicked conduct and that of our ancestors – which resembles our present conduct – which brought upon them and upon us all of these calamities. By reminding ourselves of these matters, we will repent and improve, as it states in Vayikra 26:40: And they will confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors.”

The essence is the crying and repentance, which will cause us to be better people.

Fasting for the Present

If so, we learn that the fasts are not because of pain over the past, but for what is happening right now, and as a reminder for the future.

Firstly, when there are difficulties in our present circumstances, such as war, pandemic, drought or other harsh decrees, these all join together as a continuation of the destruction of the Temple. This is why we also say many things in the Kinot for Tisha B’Av that have no connection to the destruction of the Temple, but are calamities that befell Am Yisrael throughout the exile, such as the Crusades of 1096,
the burning of the Talmud, the Holocaust, etc.

Secondly, the fast reminds us that even when things are going well, even when the Temple stands, we still need to behave properly, so that things will not take a turn for the worse – G-d forbid.

Presently, to our great sorrow, our Temple lies in ruins. And yet there are many things we have merited to see: we have returned to our Land after 2,000 years of exile, we have a State, and we have seen how the prestige of the Torah has been uplifted. Nevertheless, there are still many things lacking – in terms of our sovereign rule over all of our Land and most importantly, in terms of G-d’s presence and feeling His rule in our midst.

We are in a time of rebuilding, but now more than ever it is crucial for us to fast over the destruction of the Temple! We continue to fast on Tisha B’Av and to cry over all the things we lack – we cry that our Temple lies in ruins; we cry that G-d’s Shechina remains in exile. Through the tears, we also remember all the things we have merited, Baruch Hashem, and this gives our tears additional significance. Are we really behaving in the appropriate way to be worthy of everything we have been given? Additionally, we remind ourselves that if we have merited so much, if we have merited to see the beginning of the Redemption, we have the power to reach even greater heights. We must demand more of ourselves and strive for improvement, so we may merit to see the full Redemption, with G-d’s help.

The Four Fasts Shall Be for Joy And Happiness

As we have seen, the prophet Zechariah tells us that in the future, the fast days will become days of rejoicing. Wouldn’t it have been enough for them to have been nullified? Why do they have to be turned into holidays?

In Megillat Eicha (1:15) it states: “The L-rd has trampled all my mighty men in my midst, He summoned a set time (תERVED) against me to crush my young men...” From here the Shulchan Aruch (559:4) learns that Tisha B’Av is called a מועד (holiday), and thus we do not recite Tachanun.

The Maharal explains that the word המועד comes from the word המועד ת ValidationError – to come together. That is to say, Am Yisrael joins with G-d:

“The festivals teach us about the connection and bond that Am Yisrael has with G-d, and therefore they are called מועד, as it is written: ‘I will arrange My meetings (ו typingsJapgollyנה) with you there, and I will speak with you from atop the ark cover from between the two cherubim that are upon the Ark of the Testimony...’ This is the language of coming together and connection.” (Ohr Chadash, introduction beginning with “Rav Ashi”)

Thus, while Tisha B’Av may be a day of sorrow and pain, it also has the element of connecting to G-d. We cry and we are sad, but at the same time we feel a closeness to G-d – who loves us and is with us throughout history, even in our darkest hours. This comforts us, and so we do not say Tachanun.

A day of crying and fasting is not simply about mourning. It is a special communication with G-d through tears. One does not nullify such communication. One enhances it. When the pain will one day be nullified, we will be able to connect with Him through joy. Until then, we must connect to Him through weeping.

This may be why these fast days were not mentioned directly in Tanach as days of mourning, but rather its opposite – as days that will become joyous holidays. The essence of these fast days is not the past but the future. The destruction clarifies the reasons that brought it about and what we need to change and fix. This correction then leads us toward the future Temple, with G-d’s help. The main point of the fast is to turn these days into happiness and rejoicing.

We Believe!

Am Yisrael and the entire world is going through a very rough time. Hundreds of thousands of people have died from Corona, millions are still sick with it, many people have been hurt financially, and the future is uncertain. This reality brings us to prayer, introspection, and longing for better times, when all of these difficulties will turn the world into a better place: more ethical, spiritual, trustworthy, friendly and pure.

Through all the hardships, we remember we are living in the midst of the process of Redemption. We have had the merit to see the rebirth of the State of Israel, and to witness G-d’s abundant kindnesses every day. May we merit, with His help, to continue to fix and improve, to uplift and be uplifted, to pray from our hearts, and to see the final Redemption, speedily in our days!

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon is Head of Mizrachi’s Shalhevet Educational Advisory Board and Chairman of Sulamot
Rabbanit Rabbanit Sharon Rimon teaches Tanach and is Content Editor for the HaTanakh website

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon is Head of Mizrachi’s Shalhevet Educational Advisory Board and Chairman of Sulamot
Rabbanit Rabbanit Sharon Rimon teaches Tanach and is Content Editor for the HaTanakh website
"The problem these days is that we feel obligated to broadcast to the world that we are perfect," said Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Jacobson when we met with him in New York.

“We don’t talk enough about our difficulties since we don’t understand that these very difficulties and the challenges they present, lead us to the truth, to an honest assessment of who we are.

We have only now begun to read the Torah all over again, starting from Bereishit. Everyone is familiar with the first passage in the Torah, but what about the last? Just before we read about Creation, the last passage in the Torah reminds us of Moshe’s breaking the tablets of the covenant when he saw the people worshipping a golden calf.

The Torah ends with a description of everything Moshe did for us and yet, his final deed mentioned is his breaking of the tablets. And it’s truly astonishing that the last words of Rashi’s monumental commentary on the Torah are: yasher koach for breaking the tablets. Congratulations on breaking them! Leonard Cohen once sang:

Forget your perfect offering, There is a crack in everything, That’s how the light gets in.

There is no reason to be embarrassed by cracks since G-d is in every one of them. As the Chasidim say, there is nothing more complete than a broken heart. It’s like the earth which must be hoed and plowed, split and broken up, in order for new growth to emerge through the cracks. When something is shattered, something new
begins to emerge. We are not perfect. Even the Torah, which is the essence of perfection, ends with congratulations for breaking the tablets upon which it was written. And had they not been broken, the magnificent Oral Torah would never have come to be. Only after we are reminded of and see the importance of what is broken can we experience a new beginning once again."

2 Seeing the pain and looking it in the eyes – this is what needs to be done now, even though it is much easier to repress it. The following, written by Rabbi Erez Moshe Doron, sums up the whole story:

"Usually, we seek distraction, consolation. But on Tisha B'Av we are called upon to notice the sorrow, the imperfect reality.

Not to escape from it, not to do everything in our power just not to hurt, as in the pleasure-seeking culture of the West. Yes, there is bad in the world, there is bitterness. And we do not only seek consolation, temporary relief, but rather a full redemption, corrected, a perfect reality. This is the time of year in which we are called upon to fight for the world, to fight for the situation of Am Yisrael, which is supposed to be totally different. It is not for naught that in the Jewish sources it is said that when one goes up to the Heavenly Court, one is asked: 'Were you expecting salvation?' That is, did you really want a change? Did you believe it was possible to correct reality? Did you try to improve things? Were you hurting because of the situation?

We tend to yearn for the most only when it comes to property and money. At this time of year, we yearn for the most when it comes to joy, inner peace, spirituality, Torah and sanctity."

3 The following is one of the most meaningful messages we have received via WhatsApp, and we would like to share it with you:

"This is Michal Avera-Samuel, age 42. I am the Executive Director of Fidel, the Association for the Education and Social Integration of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Until I was nine years old, I lived in a world in which the Temple was standing. Like my parents and all my teachers, I grew up with the belief that following the destruction of the First Temple, the Second Temple was still standing in Jerusalem. We believed that the city was made of gold, in the literal sense of the meaning. I heard stories of the priests practicing their duties in the Temple, my bedtime stories were about the holiness of Jerusalem and I prayed to have the merit to return to Jerusalem, the spiritual center of the world.

Belief in Jerusalem was the key component of our education in Ethiopia, for both children and adults.

The absolute truth was passed down from generation to generation that we were obliged to be pure in heart and practice so that we would one day be worthy of coming to the Temple. This gave us the strength to survive the treacherous trek through the desert. We dreamed of Jerusalem as we buried our family and friends who did not survive the journey and as we gave over our possessions to the desert bandits. During Operation Moses, my family and I continued on foot, despite our hunger and thirst, happy in the knowledge that after so many generations we had the merit to stand at the gates of the Holy Temple, G-d's chosen site.

We reached Jerusalem.

2,000 years after the event, we found out the Temple had been destroyed. To this day, I am unable to fill the huge emptiness in my life. I remember when my father saw Jews driving their cars in Jerusalem on Shabbat. I could actually 'hear' his desolation.

The years have passed, I have grown older and I understood that I had actually gained from the experience. I was privileged to grow up with a Temple that was standing. When I formed my personality, I had the honor of having the goal of being worthy of the Temple. My parents lived to a ripe old age and their aim in life was to be pure enough for Jerusalem. It was I, as opposed to generations of Jews since the destruction of the Temple, who merited growing up differently.

I and those who were brought up like me can honestly feel the pain of the destruction. We fully understand how the loss of the Temple affects our lives."

Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir are popular Israeli media personalities and World Mizrachi’s shlichim to North America
An Online Reading of Megillat Eicha
read by Chief Rabbis around the world

Nachamu Ami: Comfort after the Destruction
Chief Rabbi David Lau

Kinot On Location
Join us from meaningful sites around the world to mourn the destruction of the Temples and other tragedies in Jewish history

Rabbi Yonoson Golomb · Eve Harow · Rabbi Simcha Hochbaum
Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon · Rabbi Dovid Roberts · Eliezer Meir Saidel
Rabbi Moshe Sebbag · Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter · Rabbi Barnea Selevan
Rabbi Jacov Di Segni · Natan Sharansky · Rabbi Michael Shudrich
Rabbi Ken Spiro · Rabbanit Shani Taragin · Rabbi Hanoch Teller

VIEW THE ENTIRE PROGRAM ON YOUR OWN SCHEDULE AT
WWW.MIZRACHI.ORG/THREEWEEKS
AND SCREENED THROUGHOUT THE DAY ON OUR FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE CHANNELS @WORLDMIZRACHI
ISRAEL JOURNEY

The Har HaBayit B’Yadeinu Debate
SHOULD WE BE VISITING THE TEMPLE MOUNT TODAY?

Rabbi Yehudah Glick and Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Moderated by Rabbi Doron Perez

A Shiur for Tisha B’Av
Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi

Home Game:
Gush Katif through the eyes of their youth
Rabbi Barnea Selavan

The Power of Rachel’s Tears
Rabbi David Fohrman

With thanks to Aleph Beta

VIRTUAL TOUR Along the Western Wall: From Glory to Destruction
Shulie Mishkin

VIRTUAL TOUR Galut Yecheonya vs. Tzidkiyahu: Through Yirmiyahu’s Eyes and Archaeology
Rabbi Barnea Selavan

VIRTUAL TOUR Herodian: From Judean Desert Palace to Refuge of Judeans
Eve Harow

VIRTUAL TOUR Eicha: Sounds of Music, Agony of Abandonment
Rabbanit Shani Taragin

VIRTUAL TOUR Eicha in Conversation with Tehillim 37
Dr. Yael Ziegler

Eicha: Sounds of Music, Agony of Abandonment
Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi

Eicha in Conversation with Tehillim 37
Dr. Yael Ziegler
On Tisha B’Av, Jews traditionally recite a series of elegiac poems, known as *kinot*, after the evening and morning prayers. These poems mourn the destruction of both the First and Second Temple in Jerusalem and other tragedies in Jewish history, including the Crusades, the Expulsion of Jews from Spain and the Holocaust. The *kinot* are recited on the night of Tisha B’Av after reciting the Book of Lamentations, which was also called “Kinot” in the Talmudic era before it assumed its more familiar name of “Eicha.”
What are the Kinot?

As we mourn the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash on Tisha B’Av, Jews customarily gather to recite *kinot* – liturgical poems that reflect upon themes of tragedy and loss. *Kinot* are recited aloud and often in unison as a way of somehow communicating with or beseeching G-d, and of feeling the spirit of mourning. There are nearly 50 *kinot* for Tisha B’Av (customs differ by tradition – e.g. Ashkenazi v. Sephardi and other differences). The *kinot* are usually referred to either by their number (e.g. *Kinah* #24) or by their first few words (e.g. אֵיכָה יָשְׁבָה, “How Is It That It Sits Alone?”).

Who wrote the Kinot?

The oldest *kinot* were composed by Rabbi Elazar HaKalir, who likely lived in the 6th-7th centuries. His *kinot* resemble the structure and content of Megillat Eicha. For example, one of his *kinot* begins each stanza with the word אֵיכָה. He often writes stanzas in the alphabetical acrostic, similar to the first four chapters of Eicha. The style deals primarily with the destruction of the Second Temple, similar to Eicha which mourns the destruction of the First Temple.

Rabbi Judah HaLevi completely changed the nature of the *kinot* with his compositions. There is no pain or despair over the tragedies of the distant or near past, but rather a longing for returning to Jerusalem, as in his poem, ציון הלא תשאלי, “Jerusalem May Not Ask You?”.

Solomon ibn Gabirol, an 11th-century Andalusian poet and Jewish philosopher in the Neoplatonic tradition, wrote *kinot* mourning the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the plight of Israel. Gabirol wrote with a pure Biblical Hebrew diction that would become the signature style of the Spanish school of Hebrew poets and he popularized the strict Arabic meter in Hebrew poetry, originally introduced by Dunash ben Labrat.

Eleazar ben Judah (Sefer HaRokeach) wrote a *kinah* following the murder of his family during the Crusades.

What are the Kinot about?

The most common topic running throughout the *kinot* of Tisha B’Av is the destruction of the First and Second Temples.

There are also *kinot* that relate to other tragedies as well. The Mishnah (Ta’anit 4:6) explains that we fast on Tisha B’Av in commemoration of five tragic events that took place on that day: the decree that our ancestors should not enter the Land, the destruction of both Temples, the capture of Betar and the plowing of Jerusalem.

What are the “new” Kinot?

A whole new wave of *kinot* were written to commemorate another set of tragedies – the Crusades, describing the violence that medieval Jews suffered at the hands of the zealous Crusaders making their way to the Holy Land. The events of the Crusades occurred roughly 1,000 years after the destruction of the ancient Temple.

Some collections of *kinot* contain even newer *kinot* – 20th-century compositions that focus explicitly on the horrors of the Holocaust.

Why were the “new” Kinot added?

In the words of Rabbi Kalonymus ben Yehuda, the author of *Kinah* #25: “Since one may not add a new day of mourning... On Tisha B’Av, my mourning I will arouse, and I will eulogize and I will wail and I will weep with a soul that is bitter.”

In other words, although Tisha B’Av was originally construed as a day of mourning for only the five tragic events listed in the Mishna, Rabbi Kalonymus ben Yehuda sees it as the “source,” in some sense, of all the tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people throughout history.

How can I connect to the Kinot?

Many of the *kinot* are written in a poetic style that is hard for even native Hebrew speakers to understand and are full of references to Tanach, Talmud, and Midrash. To give yourself a better understanding of what you are saying, try to follow along using a translated version. Additionally, if you have time (whether before Tisha B’Av or on the day itself), perhaps choose a few *kinot* to truly study in-depth to help make the recitation more meaningful. And of course there are plenty of online shiurim and other resources too. Some communities also host people who provide commentary in between the different *kinot*. This year especially, look out for online educational events on Tisha B’Av.
The Gemara (Yoma 9b) says the First Temple was destroyed because of idol worship, illicit relations, and bloodshed. The Second Temple – when the people did study Torah, keep the commandments and do good deeds – was destroyed because of baseless hatred.

The Maharal of Prague is puzzled by the lack of proportion between the transgressions in both cases. One must not transgress a Torah prohibition unless one’s life is in danger. Nevertheless, there are three exceptions (in certain cases), in which even if one’s life is in danger, he is obliged to die rather than transgress these prohibitions – idol worship, illicit relations and murder.

Despite the great importance of all the commandments between man and his fellow man, baseless hatred is not even strictly defined as a Torah prohibition.

The Maharal explains the disparity by saying there is a difference between the two Batei Mikdash. The first Beit HaMikdash was built as a direct continuation of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. The purpose of this structure was to make us feel close to G-d. The Almighty does not need a home. He commanded us to build a Mishkan and a Mikdash for our benefit.

After the people came out of Egypt, they asked, “Is the L-rd present among us or not?” (Shemot 17:7). Then G-d tells them, ‘I will give you a place where you will feel the inspiration of the Shechina, and you will never ask such a question again’ (Kitri, article 3). The Beit HaMikdash is designed for humans, to help them ascend the path of holiness.

However, when the building no longer served as a source of spiritual inspiration for the people – and they degenerated into the three cardinal sins – there was no reason to leave it standing.

The Second Temple was built with a completely different purpose. Ezra knew, as did the people, that their spiritual level was not as it once was. A few prophets still remained but the people were beginning to disperse among the nations. Inter-marriage was rife and there was real concern for the physical existence of the Jewish people, let alone their spiritual survival.

Therefore, the second Beit HaMikdash was not on the same spiritual level as the first. Not only because it lacked five basic elements – like the Ark of the Covenant, for example – but because this House did not merit the same level of inspiration from the Shechina.

Nevertheless, the nation was happy, because the goal of stopping national splintering had been achieved. Everyone would gather in one place where they would unite as one people, with one spiritual purpose. They would try to perhaps restore the spiritual level of the former Temple. One spiritual center common to those in Zion and to their exiled brethren in Babylon.

However, writes the Maharal, when this Temple too no longer fulfilled its purpose, i.e. when hatred and disunity infected the people to the extent that great Sages sat still and did not protest the demeaning of a Jew (the famous story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza) – and when this became a common occurrence, there was no justification to leave G-d’s Home, the symbol of baseless love and unity, intact. Thus the Temple was destroyed because it was necessary to shock the people again, so they would understand the evil of their actions, and begin to gather the fragments to rebuild themselves and their physical and spiritual unity.

Hence the destruction of both Batei Mikdash, though indeed for disproportionate reasons, served precisely the same purpose, as was needed at those two particular points in our history.

Now, in our times, the rebuilding work has begun: “Thus says the L-rd G-d: I am taking the Children of Israel from among the nations to which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own Land. I will make them one nation in the Land... They shall never again defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their sins... They shall be my people and I will be their G-d...”

...I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant with them... and will set my Sanctuary among them for evermore. My dwelling-place shall be with them and I will be their G-d, and they shall be My people. Then the nations shall know that I the L-rd sanctify Israel, when My Sanctuary is among them for evermore” (Yechezkel 37: 21-28).

May we see this fulfilled speedily in our days.

Rabbi David Lau is the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel
Many have the impression that the Beit HaMikdash’s main function is to enable the offering of korbanot. However, the Beit HaMikdash is also the central location of Torah study. The Gemara (Yoma 52b) tells us that towards the end of the First Temple period, Yoshiyahu HaMelech hid the luchot in a special vault beneath the Temple Mount, constructed for this purpose by Shlomo HaMelch. The Gemara (53b-54a) brings a dispute among the Tannaim as to whether the luchot remained in this location during the period of the Second Beit HaMikdash or whether they were removed and taken to Bavel. The Rambam (Hilchot Beit Habechira 4:1) cites the first opinion as to the current location of the luchot.

Rav Soloveitchik noted that the very fact the Rambam rendered a ruling regarding this machloket indicates that he viewed it not merely as a historical issue, but as one with halachic significance. The machloket revolves around the question of whether it is possible to have a Beit HaMikdash without the luchot. The accepted opinion maintains that for the Beit HaMikdash to be invested with kedusha, it must function as a Mishkan HaEdut, housing the luchot haEdut. As such, the Second Beit HaMikdash, by definition, must have housed the luchot, albeit in an underground vault. Thus, the essence of kedushat haMikdash rested on the fact that the Torah, in the form of the luchot, always remained within the Beit HaMikdash.

The Sifrei discusses a situation regarding whether the first word in the passuk, מְעֹנָה אֱלֹקֵי קֶדֶם – “The abode of G-d immemorial” (Devarim 33:27), should be spelled מְעֹנָה or מְעֹנָה. The Tannaim resolved the question by checking the three Sifrei Torah in the azarah of the Beit HaMikdash. They determined the correct mesorah of the passuk based on the majority, as two of the three Sifrei Torah spelled the word מְעֹנָה. Why was the decision determined by these Sifrei Torah, and not by the majority of all the Sifrei Torah in the world?

Why was the decision determined by these Sifrei Torah, and not by the majority of all the Sifrei Torah in the world?

Apparently, the Sifrei Torah in the azarah have special halachic status. Only the Sifrei Torah of the Beit HaMikdash serve the role of maintaining the mesorah of the text of Torah SheBeichtav. Similarly, Midrash Rabbah (Devarim, parasha 9) teaches that Moshe Rabbeinu, who was very concerned about misrepresentation of the Torah, wrote 13 Sifrei Torah on the day he was to die, one for each of the 12 tribes and one to be placed in the Aron. This Sefer Torah in the Beit HaMikdash would be used to protect the authentic Torah text, to disprove anyone who sought to falsify it.

The Beit HaMikdash was also the central location of Torah SheBe’al Peh because it was the official meeting place of the Beit Din HaGadol (Supreme Court). The Sanhedrin was seated in the lishkat haGazit in the Beit HaMikdash. In other words, the Beit HaMikdash in its complete form is supposed to house the Chief Rabbinate. This is because, as the Rambam (Hilchot Mamrim 1:1) explains, the primary function of the Beit Din HaGadol is to serve as the “international kollel” of K’hal Yisrael, to preserve the mesorah of the Torah SheBe’al Peh and transmit it to the next generation.

We can now understand the intent of the very fact we recite after Shemoneh Esrei, which includes a request for two seemingly unrelated things: שֶׁיִבָּנֶה בֵּית הַמִקְדָּשׁ בִּמְהֵרָה בְיָמֵינוּ, וְתֵן חֶלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ – “that the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days, and grant us our share in Your Torah.” Since the Beit HaMikdash is the primary makom Torah, we ask for our portion in Torah together with a plea to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash.

While it is true that we have not been able to begin the building of the Beit HaMikdash, we recognize that preparations for its construction are underway. There are certain specific mitzvot that will hasten the coming of Mashiach, one of the most effective of which is Talmud Torah. The many yeshivot in the Old City, and the fact there is so much more Torah being learned than ever before – especially in the Old City – serve as preparation for the building of the Beit HaMikdash.

Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Moadim.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter is Rosh Yeshiva and Rosh Kollel at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University.
Starting with the Fast of Tammuz, we begin a period in the Jewish calendar known as The Three Weeks, culminating in the 9th of Av. During this period, we recall the tragedies throughout history that have befallen the Jewish people, many of which, according to the Sages, were brought about as a result of sinat chinam, baseless hatred and discord between individual Jews and within the Jewish people.

Jews are an argumentative people. We say “The L-rd is my shepherd” but no Jew was ever a sheep. I remember once having a dialogue with the late and great Israeli novelist Amos Oz who began by saying, “I’m not sure I’m going to agree with Rabbi Sacks on everything, but then, on most things, I don’t agree with myself.”

Ours is the only civilization I know whose canonical texts are anthologies of arguments. The prophets argued with G-d; the rabbis argued with one another. We are a people with strong views – it is part of who we are. Our ability to argue, our sheer diversity, culturally, religiously and in every other way, is not a weakness but a strength. However when it causes us to split apart, it becomes terribly dangerous because whilst no empire on earth has ever been able to defeat us, we have, on occasions, been able to defeat ourselves.

It happened three times. The first was in the days of Yosef and his brothers when the Torah says, “They could no longer speak peaceably together.” The brothers sold Yosef as a slave and yet eventually they all, as well as their grandchildren, ended up in slavery. The second followed the completion of the First Temple. Shlomo died, his son took over, the kingdom split in two. That was the beginning of the end of both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms. The third was during the Roman siege of Jerusalem, when the Jewish men and women besieged inside were more focused on fighting one another than the enemy outside. Those three splits within the Jewish people caused the three great exiles of the Jewish people.
How then do we contain that diversity within a single people, bound together in fate and in destiny? I think there are seven principles.

**Principle 1**
**Keep talking**
Remember what the Torah says about Yosef and his brothers: וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַּבְּרוֹ לְשָׁלֹם – “They couldn’t speak to him in peace.” In other words, Rabbi Yonason Eybeschutz says, had they kept speaking, eventually, they would have made peace. So keep talking to one another.

**Principle 2**
**Listen to one another**
There is good news about the Jewish people and bad news. The good news is we are amongst the greatest speakers in the world. The bad news is we are among the world’s worst listeners. שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל calls on us to listen to one another in a way that we can actually hear what our opponent is saying. If we do this, we discover it is not just a powerful way to avoid conflict, but profoundly therapeutic as well.

**Principle 3**
**Work to understand those with whom you disagree**
Remember why the law follows Hillel rather than Shamai. According to the Talmud, Hillel was humble and modest; he taught the views of his opponents even before his own. He labored to understand the point of view with which he disagreed.

**Principle 4**
**Never seek victory**
Never ever seek to inflict defeat on your opponents. If you seek to inflict defeat on your opponent, they must, by human psychology, seek to retaliate and inflict defeat on you. The end result is though you win today, you lose tomorrow and everyone loses in the end. Do not think in terms of victory or defeat. Think in terms of the good of the Jewish people.

**Principle 5**
**If you seek respect, give respect**
Remember the principle of the Book of Proverbs: “As water reflects face to face, so does the heart of person to person.” As you behave to others, they will behave to you. If you show contempt for other Jews, they will show contempt to you. If you respect other Jews, they will show respect to you.

**Principle 6**
**You can disagree, but still care**
Jews will never agree on everything, but we remain one extended family. If you disagree with a friend, tomorrow they may no longer be your friend. But if you disagree with your family, tomorrow they are still your family. In the end, family is what keeps us together, and that is expressed best in the principle כל ישראל ערבין זא בורח – All Jews are responsible for one another. Ultimately, I do not need you to agree with me, I just need you to care about me.

Remember that this is the ultimate basis of Jewish peoplehood. As Shimon bar Yochai said, “When one Jew is injured, all Jews feel the pain.” So that is why we must strive to remember principle six. I don’t need you to agree with me, I just need you to care about me.

**Principle 7**
**Remember that G-d chose us as a people**
G-d did not choose only the righteous, He chose all of us. We stand before G-d as a people, and it is as a people that we stand before the world. The world does not make distinctions. Antisemites do not make distinctions. We are still united by a covenant of shared memory, shared identity and shared fate, even if we do not share the exact same faith.

The Sages said a very striking thing. They said, “Great is peace because even if Israel is worshipping idols and there is peace among them, G-d will never allow harm to happen to them.” That is a powerful idea to reflect upon.

So the next time you are tempted to criticize another Jew or walk away from a group of Jews you think have offended you, make that extra effort to stay together, to forgive, to listen, to try and unite, because if G-d loves each of us, can we justify failing to strive to do this too?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth
The Power of Hope

Tisha B’Av is not just a day of mourning. It’s a day of yearning.

The Gemara relates that when we leave this world, we stand before our Creator and are asked a number of questions about the way we lived our life. One of them is: צפתת לישועה – “Did you long for redemption?”

We are not asked simply whether we believed in the final Redemption, but whether we longed for it. The Chafetz Chaim explains that the word צפתת is from the root of צפה, which means to look and to hope; like when you are waiting for someone to arrive and you keep looking down the road, wondering when they are coming. This is what צפתת לישועה is asking: did we want the final Redemption? Did we look out towards the horizon waiting for it to happen? Did we yearn for it? Did we keep looking down the road, anxiously awaiting the arrival of Mashiach?

Did we look out towards the horizon waiting for it to happen?

What are we yearning for? The Rambam says the great sages and prophets throughout the generations longed for the days of Mashiach and anticipated the time of the ultimate redemption not because they wanted us to be raised above the other nations, and certainly not in order to indulge in material prosperity and ease. Rather, they looked forward, fervently, to a world filled with the awareness and presence of G-d – a time of unimaginable clarity in which all the secrets of the Torah would be revealed. The Rambam says it will be a time in which G-d’s presence is manifest, and because of this, there will be no war or jealousy or hatred or competition, and there will be incredible abundance and joy and prosperity and peace.

This is the redemption we long for. A time when, due to the miraculous abundance and peace and universal goodwill, we will be able to devote ourselves fully to spiritual pursuits and especially the learning of Torah. A time when “the whole world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters that cover the sea.”

This is what we are yearning for.

We look around the world now and G-d’s presence is hidden; many people even deny G-d’s existence altogether. There is a sense that things should be better. There is a lack of appreciation for faith and truth. What we long for is a time when G-d’s presence is manifest, when there’s no more pain or suffering, no more conflict, confusion or disease. We long for a better world. This is what Tisha B’Av is about: being able to sit down on the floor and mourn; being able to feel the pain and long for things to be different, for the world to be better. But this yearning is not just about mourning. It is about hope.

Three times a day, we say in Aleinu: עליי מ’yישועה כל ה’ – “Therefore, we place our hope in You, G-d.” The Chafetz Chaim comments on these words that believing in redemption gives a person hope, which is the most powerful motivation to do good in the world – to do the right thing. To build a better today, we need to hope for a better tomorrow.

We are living through difficult times. Our world has been upended by an invisible virus. Livelihoods have been compromised, shuls and schools have been shuttered, lives have been lost. These are times that cry out for hope. It’s not easy – but it is especially during times like these that we need to be hopeful and optimistic; to long for an end to suffering and for the dawn of something better and brighter.

Even Tisha B’Av – our time of mourning – is also our time of yearning, our time of hope. It is a day we don’t say the supplication of the Tachanun prayer, as a sign of the hope within our sorrow. We yearn for redemption, we wait in eager anticipation and expectation for a better tomorrow – we pray to G-d that our pain and sorrow be transformed into blessing and celebration. We yearn for a time when the entire world will be filled with G-d’s presence and suffering will come to an end – “and G-d will wipe away tears from all faces.”

Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein is the Chief Rabbi of South Africa

1 Shabbat 31a.
2 Enumerated by the Rambam as one of the Thirteen Principles of Faith in his commentary to Mishna, Sanhedrin 10:1 (Principle 12); Hilchot Melachim 11:1.
3 Tzipita LiYeshuah, Chapter 3.
4 Hilchot Melachim 12:4.
5 Ibid 12:5.
7 Tzipita LiYeshuah, Chapter 3.
8 Isaiah 25:8; Moed Katan 28b; Sanhedrin 91b.
A journey through Judaism's most controversial issues...

Explore intriguing topics such as:

- How Jewish philosophy guides Torah interpretation
- Can Jewish tradition combat Bible criticism?
- Divine providence and the existence of evil
- The origin and development of the oral tradition
- Rabbinic law vs. the spirit of halachah
- Rambam's Judaism in a post-Aristotelian world

“Sophisticated discussion of many controversial philosophical and theological topics...sorely needed in this generation”

Rav Zev Leff, Rav/Rosh Yeshiva in Moshav Matityahu

“A remarkable new philosophical approach to Torah and Jewish faith, outstanding in its erudition...thoroughly engaging...This is the work of a major new talent in Jewish thought.”

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Former Chief Rabbi of the UK

www.JudaismReclaimed.com
One of the signs of the coming of Mashiach is וַתְּהִי הָאֱמֶת נֶעְדֶּרֶת — “And Truth will be lacking,” i.e. not present. Chazal say this means שֶׁנַּעֲשֵׂית עֲדָרִים עֲדָרִים — “that it has become flocks upon flocks” (Sanhedrin 97a). The difference is huge: something that is no longer here will be forgotten, but if we understand that it (Truth) is actually still here, just broken into pieces, and we will gather together (flocks upon flocks) in peace, we will discover it.

In other words, if you don't know how to yearn for the Mikdash, if you've forgotten what we're yearning for... yearn for each other. That will be sufficient, for when the flocks gather, רָחֵל בָּאָה עִם הַצֹּאן — “Rachel comes with the sheep.” Rachel Imeinitu doesn't need us to remember her; all she wants is that her children return to their borders.

When the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed, our enemies placed an idol in the Sanctuary. “Yirmiyahu stood and did not say נָוָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי נֹרָא — not terrible. There's no G-d!” In a situation in which G-d's awesomeness was now absent, Yirmiyahu was not able to say the word נָוָא at the start of the Amidah prayer — נָוָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי נֹרָא. When you omit the word ‘terrible’ you are essentially saying לא נָוָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי נֹרָא — it’s not so terrible. There's no Temple anymore? לא נָוָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי נֹרָא. My relationship with my children is cold and distant? לא נָוָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי נֹרָא. Hundreds of thousands are sick with Corona? It happens. לא נָוָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי נֹרָא.

Yes, all year round I preach comfort: your relationship is difficult? Take comfort in your children. You're finding it hard to make ends meet? At least you have your health.

Not now though. Not at this time of the year. Now we say: אני נורא! It is terrible! And G-d is Awesome!

And that is why our Sages did indeed reinstate the epithet נָוָא into our prayers. Precisely in the place where His crown fell, so to speak, G-d asks that we restore it, that we remember our Father as He was in the Palace. We shouldn't walk past His desolate House and say לא נָוָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי נֹרָא, it's not so bad.

We should remember that we have forgotten.

Ben-Zion’s chupa was a different type of chupa, a Corona chupa. Without the elderly, without grandparents. And just like the inauguration of the Second Beit HaMikdash, when the young men rejoiced, the old men, remembering the real joy, stood and wept.

But with a magnificent view of the Temple Mount, as everyone sang תָּאֵר עֵצֶת יִרְשָׁלַיִם — “If I forget you, O Jerusalem...” I gazed into the distance and saw Mother, smiling and tearful. She was singing with us: “And G-d is Awesome!” בשלא נוֹרָא כִּי נֹרָא — “crown of her husband, enter in peace.” The crown had been returned to her head.

She remembered that we have remembered.

1 Hadar was an Israeli soldier killed and captured by Hamas during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. His body has not been returned to Israel.
While Tisha B’Av is a day of mourning for the destruction of both Batei Mikdash, it is referred to in our holy writings as a moed, a holiday. How could a day of such sadness and tears, when G-d’s Presence left its earthly abode and became distant from us, be designated a holiday?

The Siftei Chaim teaches us that once G-d removed His Presence from the Beit HaMikdash and the enemy burned it down, His Presence was no longer openly manifest in the world. The Beit HaMikdash devoid of G-d’s Presence remained an edifice of mere stone and mortar. As such, our awareness of His Presence in our lives became dimmed. It’s as if the clouds descended to obscure the sunlight. The sunlight of G-d’s Providence was still here, but we could not recognize it. All of Creation felt the distancing of G-d’s Presence. While Bnei Yisrael cried by the waters of Babylon, G-d Himself also cried.

The Siftei Chaim continues. An archangel then approached G-d and suggested that he cry and not G-d, for he is the angel responsible for the manifestation of G-d’s Presence in the world as a result of Bnei Yisrael’s good deeds. Bnei Yisrael were at fault for no longer being the recipient of G-d’s beneficence, not G-d. But G-d responds that He too needs to cry, for there is a vacuum and desecration in G-d’s Presence on Earth. He cannot rain down blessings of goodness because Bnei Yisrael has destroyed the tools that bring the closeness of HaKadosh Baruch Hu to Creation, and He is bereft of giving. I will go, says G-d, to the innermost chambers to cry, where even you, the archangel, are forbidden to enter. I will go into the hearts of every one of My people. Perhaps they will again recognize My Presence within the sanctuary of their hearts and return to Me with love as I stay with them.

This is HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s cry, echoed in the first word of Megillat Eicha. Jeremiah cried, “אֵיכָה – how is it possible...” and G-d cries out, as He did to Adam, “אֵיכָה – Where are you.” Where are you? Where is your heart? Are you searching for the connection to your Maker? Are you a conduit for G-d’s blessings to flow down to Earth? When we hear Eicha on Tisha B’Av, we should be asking ourselves why we have left Torah, and how can we facilitate kiruv, and approach a closeness to G-d again. We should recognize the intrinsic loss, and not just the trials and travails that Galut has brought upon us.

The Netivot Shalom uses this idea to understand why the Megillah says this day will be called a holiday. He explains that besides closeness and distance, there is another kind of relationship: the worst level is when you think you’re close and don’t even recognize that the relationship has deteriorated or non-existent. When you rationalize your evil, sinful or abusive actions into the belief they are in fact righteous and beneficial.

The Siftei Chaim cites the prophet Jeremiah in showing that this mindset had corrupted Bnei Yisrael. “How can you say I have not become impure, I have not followed Ba’al,” admonishes the prophet, when the evidence is right there. It is for this abnegation of responsibility, of “I have not sinned” that G-d is punishing Bnei Yisrael and Jerusalem. With the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, the eyes of Bnei Yisrael opened up and they realized the extent of their sins. They had not yet re-established the closeness with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, but at least they could now acknowledge their responsibility in creating the distance from Him and yearn for the repair of the relationship. This awakening alone merited celebration as a holiday.

Our problem today is we don’t realize what we are missing. Even the mitzvot we do, we do more through habit than as a means of facilitating G-d’s renewed open Presence on earth. Our perspective in our daily life should be greater than performing the letter of the law. We should be focused on making G-d’s Presence manifest in the world again, as it was in the time of the Temple, by using our words and actions to this end rather than for rote observance. Even seemingly mundane tasks, like earning a living, caring for our children, can be viewed as doing G-d’s work on Earth and bringing His Presence closer. Our fast on Tisha B’Av should arouse this yearning within us.

Mrs. Shira Smiles is a sought-after international lecturer, a popular seminary teacher, and an experienced curriculum developer.
We always read Parashat Devarim on the Shabbat before Tisha B’Av.

Why the juxtaposition of Devarim to Tisha B’Av? In perek alef, Moshe recalls the sin of the spies, who went up to scout out the Land of Israel (Bamidbar 13), and came back with a slanderous report. In response to their report, the nation sat and wept that night (Bamidbar 14:1).

Chazal teach that in response to their crying for naught, G-d said: you have cried for no reason, I will establish for you a crying for generations (Ta'anit 29a). That night of crying was the very first Tisha B’Av, which foreshadowed destruction through the ages.

In Megillat Eicha (4:11), we read: “G-d has accomplished His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger; and He has kindled a fire in Zion, which has devoured her foundations.” Chazal teach (Eicha Rabbah 4:14) that in an act of Divine Rachamim (Mercy), Churban Beit HaMikdash, ensured the eternal survival of Knesset Yisrael. Instead of destroying the nation, the Almighty destroyed our holy places and our Land... but promised that our people would always survive.

Rav Soloveitchik: “Paradoxically, the moment the Beit HaMikdash was set ablaze was a moment of relief. At that moment, it became clear that G-d decided to take the collateral, the Beit HaMikdash, instead of pursuing the real debtor, the Jewish people. Paradoxically, once He took away the Beit HaMikdash in the afternoon of Tisha B’Av, the nechama, the consolation, could begin. Tisha B’Av is a day of limitless despair and boundless hope and faith” (Kinot Masoret HaRav, p.283).

“... He wept, of course. And my mother wept... Nevertheless, his faith in the eventual downfall of the tyrant never wavered, and anyone who came in contact with him was infused with his contagious emunah and bitachon – his unshakeable faith in the yeshua (Divine salvation).”

“... On the day I arrived in America, a Yiddish paper printed an article mentioning my father’s name as one of the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Did my father die a hero’s death? Maybe. He was involved in some underground activities from early on, but I was not present at the end, so I can never know for sure. This much though, I do know: that my father, like thousands of others, lived a hero’s life. Every day of Father’s life was filled to overflowing with heroic deeds of chesed and malasim tovim, of high-risk communal involvement, of tzedaka, hachnasat orchim, and bitachon – unbreakable links in an eternal chain of valor and heroism” (Faith Amid the Flames, p.123-124).

May we merit to see our destroyed places rebuilt and witness the return of our people to our Land, with the ultimate redemption. But until that great day, may we take comfort in knowing that our great nation is eternal, and has survived and flourished despite every enemy, every churban, every calamity and every exile.

Mrs. Michal Horowitz teaches Judaic Studies classes to adults of all ages.
When Jewish teenagers graduate high school, a year in Israel provides a foundation for their lives.

Now, unprecedented financial challenges due to Covid-19 are endangering the gap year experience.

Yeshivot and seminaries are at the heart of Torat Eretz Yisrael, and the future of these institutions is at stake.

As Jewish communities, we are responsible for safeguarding the Jewish future, Jewish identity and Jewish learning, from which we all benefit.

Mizrachi is leading the effort to bridge the financial gap, partnering with more than 40 Torah institutions.

Tomorrow’s leaders need you today.

On July 27-28, 2020, safeguard the next generation of Jewish leaders at cmatch.me/mizrachi
Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel

As his name ‘Ben-Zion’ or ‘son of Zion’ states, Rabbi Uziel was born in Jerusalem in 1880, the newest member of a very prestigious Sephardi family. His father, Joseph Raphael, was the Av Beit Din of the Sephardi community in Jerusalem. Following in his father’s footsteps, by the age of 20, Ben-Zion Uziel was teaching at the Tiferet Yerushalayim Yeshiva and helped found the Machzikei Torah Yeshiva for Sephardim.

In 1911, Rabbi Uziel was appointed ‘Chacham Bashi’ of the Sephardi community in Jaffa and immediately attempted to improve the community functions, raising the status of the community in the eyes of the rest of the Yishuv. Here he became friendly with Rav Kook and together they worked for better inter-communal relations between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. He set up yeshivot, improved the Beit Din and helped build various community centers.

During World War I, he worked tirelessly for the protection of the rights of the Jews in Eretz Yisrael. He was exiled to Damascus along with the rest of the community by the Turkish rulers in 1917 but was allowed to return before the coming of the British. In 1920 he joined the Mizrachi Movement and worked on behalf of Mizrahi and the Sephardi communities in Eretz Yisrael and in the Diaspora until his death.

Rabbi Uziel’s travels took him to many countries where he sought to persuade the Jews to come to Israel. However, at the same time, the realities of the moment were his major concern. While serving as the Rabbi of Salonika, Greece for three years (a post he accepted temporarily and with the permission of the Jaffa community), he was able to set up a system of Talmud Torahs and yeshivot. It is said that during his leadership, the community was completely devoted to keeping Shabbat and Kashrut.

Upon returning to Israel, he became the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv and in 1939, Chief Sephardi Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael. In this capacity, he represented his community to the British Mandatory Government.

Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel was responsible for founding the Sha’ar Zion Yeshiva and had a hand in the beginning of the Porat Yosef Yeshivot, which now exist in many cities of Eretz Yisrael. As a member of the Mizrachi Movement, he traveled to Iraq and the United States to generate interest in aliya and financial support for the Yishuv. He also served as a Mizrachi delegate to the Zionist Congress from 1925-46. He was a prolific writer. Regarding the Redemption of Israel he wrote:

“We all desire that the ingathering of the exiles should take place from all areas where they have been scattered; and that our holy language will be upon our lips and upon the lips of our children, in building the Land and its flowering through the hands and work of Israel; and we will all strive to see the flag of freedom and redemption waving in glory and strength upon the walls of Jerusalem. But we cannot agree with those who view the buying of land as a final objective. Such purchases serve as the first step in the clothing of the soul of life and the Torah of the nation and for this, we must strive...

Those who say that the laws of our Torah have become useless, antiquated relics and its values have outlived their purpose are gravely mistaken. For we know with clear and true knowledge that the laws of G-d are truth and each day they are as new as the day they were given at Mount Sinai, and all human enlightenment until our present day has not succeeded in revealing and reaching the level of moral justice in society as well as in the family, nor the same level of righteousness of the Torah of Israel, whose ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.”

On Tisha B’Av, we commemorate the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash by reading firsthand accounts of that terrible day, along with other calamities that befell the Jewish people throughout the generations.

Despite the First Beit Hamikdash having been destroyed over 2,600 years ago, and the Second almost 2,000 years ago, signs of the destruction still remain in Jerusalem today – physical pieces of history that stand witness to our tremendous loss.

When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E, it was not enough for him to burn just the Temple. His army, led by Nevuzardan, lit the whole city ablaze. In Ir David (the City of David), in what has become known as “Area G,” you can see a layer of ash from the fire that burnt down the royal administration building near the top of the city. In one section of the area, appropriately called the “Burnt Room,” the house collapsed inward after being set on fire. Beneath the rubble is a pile of charred debris almost one meter high.

In these ruins, as well as elsewhere in Ir David, archaeologists found nearly 1,500 clay idol figurines dating to the period of Yehuda’s settlement in the city. In every single excavated building in Ir David, archaeologists have found signs of idol worship. These finds echo Yirmiyahu’s repeated attempts to rally the people and pull them away from avodah zarah. “For according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Yehuda” (Yirmiyahu 11:13). As Chazal tell us in Menachot 13:22, “Why was the First Temple in Jerusalem destroyed? Because of idolatry, sexual immorality and bloodshed.”

The ruins of Jerusalem do not just tell the story of the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash. Slightly north of Ir David is the remainder of a market built just prior to the Roman destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE.

At the corner of the southern and western walls, visitors to the Davidson Center can see what is left of the market street, including multiple stalls, as well as Robinson’s Arch, a large archway that supported one of the staircases leading up to the Temple Mount plaza.

Large piles of hewn stone, once part of administrative buildings on Har HaBayit, lie in the street. Having been toppled by the Romans, these rocks destroyed the market street below, turning a once-bustling district into a desolate ruin. Similar to the Burnt Room in Ir David, some of the rocks are marked with black soot from the fire that destroyed the Beit HaMikdash.

This devastation can also be seen in the private homes uncovered in what is today called the Herodian Quarter Museum and the Burnt House.

However, Jerusalem does not only bear witness to the destruction and exile of the Jews; it also holds the key to their future. Everywhere one looks, one can see the fulfillment of positive prophecies alongside the testimony of destruction.

Batei Machaseh Square is a great example. In the square is the base of a column the Romans transported from Har HaBayit after ransacking the Temple. Across from the column is a quote from Zecharia HaNavi, graffitied by a defender of Jerusalem in 1948, as he was being led out of the city by the Jordanians. Made permanent after the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, the quote reads, “So said the L-rd of hosts: There shall yet old men and old women sit in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for every age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the street” (Zecharia 8:4-5).

In the shadow of these two reminders of our past and future, you can see children playing, along with visitors young and old. While the city is filled with scars from our painful past, it is up to us to uncover the beauty of our bright future. May we be zoche to see the coming of Mashiach and the building of the Third Beit HaMikdash, speedily in our days.

Rivi Frankel is a tour guide in Israel working with individuals and groups from all backgrounds, and particularly with children and teens.
The three weeks between the fasts of the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av is a time of mourning for the Jewish people. These days recall the calamities that befell us during this time – exile from the Land of Israel, destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. It is referred to as Bein HaMetzarim, a time when the Jewish people are “Between the Straits.”

The Shulchan Aruch brings down a curious custom for the Three Weeks: teachers should not strike their students during this time. Not that teachers are encouraged to hit students during the rest of the year either, but during these Three Weeks, they should be especially careful to avoid punishing students. This custom is apparently the source for Rav Kook’s dictum for the month of Tammuz:

“Our generation is an amazing, wondrous phenomenon. It is difficult to find a similar instance in all of our history – a generation composed of contradictions, a mixture of light and darkness. It is precisely the nation’s greatness that has brought about its spiritual decline. This generation finds that all it hears and sees from parents and teachers is beneath it. The morals [of the previous generation] fail to capture their hearts and quench their thirst. They fail to instill fear and trepidation. This generation has already risen beyond the stage when one runs away due to fear, real or imagined, physical or spiritual.

Great persecutions and upheavals have made them tough and intrepid. Fear and threats cannot move them. They will only rise and follow a path of life that is lofty and enlightened. Even if they wanted to, they cannot be bowed and bent, saddled with burdens and yokes... They cannot be motivated to return [to traditional Judaism] through fear. But they are very much capable of returning through love – a love bound to lofty awe... A great-spirited generation seeks and must seek, in every direction that it turns, great ideals.

This is not a generation of pettiness, but one of greatness and high ideals. The only way to reach out to such a generation is through spiritual greatness.”

Path of Pleasantness

A careful analysis of the wording in Rav Kook’s adage reveals an additional insight. The phrase “beating rod” does not appear in the legal code of the Shulchan Aruch. Rather, this phrase comes from a Talmudic statement in Sanhedrin 24a, where the Sages contrasted the Torah scholars of the Land of Israel with those living in Babylon.

The Babylonian scholars were sharp and caustic in their legal debates. Their method of Torah study was often like a “beating rod” – sharp and unpleasant.

The scholars of Eretz Yisrael, on the other hand, would gently correct one another. Their gracious method of study was characterized as one of noam, pleasantness and mutual respect.

In short, a successful educational approach for this unique era of redemption must embrace two qualities:

It must contain a spiritual greatness that will inspire an idealistic generation.

It must follow the pleasant path of the gentle scholars of Eretz Yisrael, who have no need to resort to the harsh and strident methods of their colleagues in the Exile.

Adapted from Moadei HaRe’iyah.

Rabbi Chanan Morrison is the author of several books on Rav Kook’s writings.
Write it Down… Before it’s Too Late

If you don’t write down your parents’ stories, they’ll be forgotten in a generation or two.

➤ Don’t know where to start?
➤ No time?
➤ Can’t get around to it?

Let me do the work for you!

“I never knew so much work went into writing a book but now I know. Hours on hours of interviews but Danny knew exactly what to say and how long to speak to him... thank you so much!”

S.K.
Netanya

“These untold secrets have monumental significance to me and my family and have had a huge impact on our understanding of my mother’s difficult war experiences.”

Evelyn Nuszen
Jerusalem

“Working with Danny Verbov was a great source of joy and fun. His sensitivity and humor enhanced our working relationship and most importantly resulted in a book I am truly proud of.”

Sandy Collins
London

To honor, preserve and celebrate your parents’ lives through a beautiful family legacy book, contact Danny Verbov at dannyverbov@gmail.com or call +972-52-3115682

www.dannyverbov.com

Danny Verbov
Family Legacy Books
The media’s treatment of Israel has been among the Jewish State’s most vexing challenges. Most major media organizations have reporters based in Israel, an open society that affords journalists – domestic and foreign – access to policymakers, the military, and the general citizenry. Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza are, globally speaking, a very confined area. When conflicts arise, hundreds of additional journalists flock to Israel and rush to the border, sending back reports on the fighting in real-time. It should be no mystery to reporters based in Israel that the Jewish State faces implacable enemies. And yet that message rarely gets through. If it does, it’s done grudgingly. Simplistic explanations abound, including the “Palestinians as David, the Israelis as Goliath” underdog argument, which translates into “understanding” of violent “resistance to the occupation.” Or maybe the media organizations that the reporters represent hew to an ideological viewpoint – which just happens to be identical to those writing or broadcasting the stories themselves. The editors and the headline writers back home, far removed from the action, seal the deal by summarizing already biased stories.

The early summer demonstrations in Gaza last year produced a Washington Post story headlined “A day of gas inside a Gaza ambulance,” which focused on Palestinian medics who treated the wounded near the border fence separating Gaza from Israel. The opening lines in this seven-paragraph story tell you immediately, without reading further, where this story is going:

The first patients don’t come until 5:39 PM. They crowd around the ambulance, choking on tear gas. Israeli soldiers, just a few hundred yards away on the other side of the boundary fence, had fired a volley of hissing canisters at the protesters.

The article includes an interview with a Palestinian paramedic, which included the following – not a quote, but the reporter’s own paraphrase of the interviewee: “It doesn’t compare to the stress of the 2014 war, though, when he spent his days in the ambulance worrying about his family’s safety as Gaza came under heavy bombardment from Israel and Hamas fired rockets back.”

Wait a minute: wasn’t it Hamas that fired the rockets into Israel first, and then Israel that defended itself with airstrikes against Hamas targets?

Playing fast and loose with hearsay and unsubstantiated charges was rife during the Friday protests in Gaza. Casualty numbers were attributed to “Gaza health officials.” Let’s consider an egregious example of bias, carried by multiple media organizations: the case of Layla Ghandour, the Palestinian baby said by the press to have died from tear gas inhalation during the demonstrations. It was later reported that the baby had actually died due to a heart condition and Hamas had paid the family to lie about the circumstances. Try to find more than a few “clarifications” of this story, in print or on the air. You won’t.

For days, the press reported on the carnival-like atmosphere of the demonstrations, mentioning picnicking families and ice cream vendors. Even after a Hamas official boasted that more than 50 of those declared dead in the demonstrations were Hamas operatives, most media organizations went with their “mostly peaceful protest” stories, rarely mentioning the revelation about the 50, and playing down Hamas’ central role in the whole affair, including the torching of Israeli farmland and nature preserves by fiery kites and balloons.

Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran publicly call for and seek Israel’s destruction. Terrorists can strike anytime at Israelis, ramming pedestrians with cars and bulldozers, stabbing people on the street, or attempting to kidnap civilians and soldiers. Israel’s right to defend itself and be at peace with its neighbors should not be in question. But many journalists don’t report it that way, choosing many times to give those who seek to destroy Israel a free pass.

It is our right to call out those who engage in advancing a tainted narrative and set the record straight – sometimes multiple times a day – when the media does not present the full picture.

This opinion piece is adapted from an article appearing in The Algemeiner in August 2018.
Tzom and Ta’anit

Hebrew has two words that both mean fast (abstaining from food): **tzom** (צום) and **ta’anit** (תאנים). What is the difference between them? The primary difference is that צום is a biblical word (appearing 26 times in Nevi’im and Ketuvim, although never in the Torah), and התאנים is primarily found in Rabbinic Hebrew (it does appear once in the Bible – Ezra 9:5). However, צום does derive from a Biblical root: צ-ר-ר (or the related root צ-ר-י). That verb is the root of the word used to command us to fast on Yom Kippur: זכָּר צַמָּא, בתאנים (Vayikra 16:31). That phrase literally means “you shall afflict your souls.” Yet, the sense of fasting is clear from the context, and is also found in parallel to צ-ר-ר in another Biblical verse: זְכָּר צָמַא (Amos 6:6) – something “bound on the wrist.”

Other words that derive from that root also indicate suffering and affliction: **anav** (אנו), צ-ר-י “humble,” **ani** (אני) “poor,” **ini** (ינני) “affliction,” **tzimukim** (צימוקים) “hair, lock or braid,” т-с-м “occupy, live.” Another word that is possibly related is **inayan**, צ-ר-י, צ-ר-ר. Today it means “matter, subject,” but in Biblical Hebrew, it meant “occupation, task.” Some linguists think that it originally meant “toilsome occupation” and derived from the root צ-ר-ר meaning “affliction.”

As we said, צ-ר-ר also means “to fast.” Surprisingly, it is not clear if it is related to the word **tzama**, צ-ר-ר – “thirst.” The cognates to each in other Semitic languages (like Aramaic, Arabic and Akkadian) don’t point to an obvious connection. That said, there does seem to be an interesting pattern, where many words that begin with the two letters צ-ר mean “to draw together, to contract.” In addition to צ-ר-ר (in which one restrains oneself), and צ-ר-ר (where the tongue and throat contract from lack of water), here are a few others:

- **צ-ר-ר** – to join, couple. From here we get the words **tzemed**, צ-ר-ר – pair, and **tzamid**, צ-ר-ר – bracelet, something “bound on the wrist.”
- **צ-ר-ר** – to lock or braid of hair, also a veil. The hair is drawn together.
- **צ-ר-ר** – to press, reduce, contract. From here, Rashi coined the word **tzimtzum**, צ-ר-ר – restriction, limitation, which was later adopted by the Kabbalah.
- **צ-ר-ר** – to shrink, shrivel. Raisins in Hebrew are צ-ר-ר, צ-ר-ר.
- **צ-ר-ר** – one meaning is “to join, attach, contract.” From here the word **tzomet**, צ-ר-ר – juncture. Another meaning is “to oppress, subdue, destroy,” and is the root of the word **tzemihat**, צ-ר-ר – “finality.” The meaning of “pressure” is identified with the sense of contraction we see in other words with this root.

In modern Hebrew, צ-ר-ר is used for all kinds of fasts, including medical ones. צ-ר-ר is restricted to the religious realm, and can also refer to refraining from other things, like from speaking (a **ta’anit dibbur**).

**Bein HaMetzarim**

The three-week period between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B’Av is known as **bein hametzarim** (between the straits). The origin of the phrase is from Eichah 1:3: כָּל רֹדְפֶיהָ הִשִּׂיגוּהָ בֵּין מֵצַר וּמֵצַר, “All her pursuers overtook her in the narrow places.”

The word for “narrow places, straits” is **meitzar**, מ-ר-ר. Others translate the phrase as “when she was in distress.” Both meanings derive from the root צ-ר-ר – “to be distress.” A third opinion is that the word means “border.” According to this understanding, whenever the Jews would flee to the border, their neighbors would hand them over to their enemies.

מ-ר-ר meaning “border, boundary” is also possibly an origin of the Hebrew word for Egypt – **Mitzrayim**, מ-ר-ר. Egypt was divided into two lands – Upper and Lower Egypt (which can explain the plural form, with the suffix -im). And why was Egypt referred to with the word for border? Either because the meaning extended from border to “region,” or because the Egyptians were known for having strict borders.

Perhaps due to association with the word **tzarah**, צ-ר-ר – “trouble, sorrow,” these weeks are known as days of sadness. But we should remember that the original meaning referred to a narrow strait or a border area. May our sadness be limited to this time of year, and in the future, may these weeks become days of joy.

David Curwin is a writer living in Efrat, and the author of the Balashon blog, balashon.com
Mourning the Churban in a Rebuilt Jerusalem

The traditional text of Nachem, the additional prayer recited on Tisha B’Av afternoon at Mincha, describes Jerusalem as, “the city that is in sorrow, laid waste, and in ruin.” The more subtle language, Rav Goren felt, better expressed the new reality of a Jerusalem in Jewish hands.

Serving as Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel from 1973-1983, Rav Goren attempted to formally institute the changes he made to Nachem, but was unsuccessful. While his changes were minor, and closer to the original text as it appears in the Talmud Yerushalmi, they were controversial, with many leading authorities at the time opposing his move.

Rav Isser Yehuda Unterman opposed changes to the text of Nachem because the Old City of Jerusalem was full of synagogues and the Temple Mount (Terumat HaMikdash is not standing, surely the Beit HaMikdash). If the Beit HaMikdash is not standing, surely Jerusalem can be described as being “laid waste, scorned and desolate” (See the Orthodox Union’s Mesorah 7, Elul, p. 19).

The debate over Nachem reflects the very real challenge we face today, mourning the Churban in a rebuilt Jerusalem. May we merit to mourn properly, and see the fulfillment of the promise of our Sages: “All who mourn for Jerusalem will merit to witness her joy” (Ta’anit 30b).

Rav Ovadia Yosef opposed any changes to Nachem for two reasons: 1) Our prayers were composed by the Anshei Knesset HaGedola and we do not have the authority to make any changes to the text, and 2) the traditional text of Nachem is relevant even today, considering the physical and spiritual degradation of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount (Yechave Da’at 1:43).

Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik too felt that we have no authority to make changes to the text of Nachem, and the text, as is, is relevant even today. Rav Soloveitchik explained that according to the Rambam, Jerusalem shares the sanctity of the Beit HaMikdash. If the Beit HaMikdash is not standing, surely Jerusalem can be described as being “laid waste, scorned and desolate” (See the Orthodox Union’s Mesorah 7, Elul, 5752, p. 19).

Some authorities, like Rav Zvi Yehudah Kook and Rav Shaul Yisraeli, opposed making public changes to Nachem in the repetition of the Amidah, but allowed for individuals to make changes in their own silent Amidah.

Rav Goren himself would eventually change his mind after the euphoria of those early post-Six Day-War days faded, and gave way to a stark reality. In November 1978, Rav Goren wrote that due to the “ethical, moral, and national decline” following the Yom Kippur War, and in light of plans for land concessions to the Palestinians, he is retracting his ruling in favor of the traditional nusach (Terumat HaGoren, pp. 327-329).

In the IDF Siddur he edited and published in 1970, Rav Goren wrote that the traditional liturgy is “not appropriate when Jerusalem is free and under Israel’s sovereignty.” Instead of the traditional nusach which is based on a text that appears in the Rosh, Rav Goren chose a text based on the Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachot 4:3; Ta’anit 2:2), and the Siddur of Amram Gaon and the Rambam, which limits the description of Jerusalem to “the city that is in sorrow, laid waste, and in ruin.” The more subtle language, Rav Goren felt, better expressed the new reality of a Jerusalem in Jewish hands.

But today Jerusalem is not “...desolate without inhabitants.” With over half a million Jewish residents, Jerusalem is teeming with life; her skies lined with new buildings, as the city continues to grow by leaps and bounds. One cannot help but feel that we are witnessing the fruition of Zechariah’s prophecy, “Old men and women will once again sit in the streets of Jerusalem... and boys and girls will play in her streets” (Zechariah 8:4-5), before our very eyes.

Following the dramatic events of June 1967, Rav Shlomo Goren, then Chief Rabbi of the IDF, made changes to the nusach of Nachem to reflect the new reality of a unified Jerusalem, under Jewish sovereignty.

In the IDF Siddur he edited and published in 1970, Rav Goren wrote that the traditional liturgy is “not appropriate when Jerusalem is free and under Israel’s sovereignty.” Instead of the traditional nusach which is based on a text that appears in the Rosh, Rav Goren chose a text based on the Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachot 4:3; Ta’anit 2:2), and the Siddur of Amram Gaon and the Rambam, which limits the description of Jerusalem as, “the city that is in sorrow, laid waste, and in ruin.” The more subtle language, Rav Goren felt, better expressed the new reality of a Jerusalem in Jewish hands.

But today Jerusalem is not “...desolate without inhabitants.” With over half a million Jewish residents, Jerusalem is teeming with life; her skies lined with new buildings, as the city continues to grow by leaps and bounds. One cannot help but feel that we are witnessing the fruition of Zechariah’s prophecy, “Old men and women will once again sit in the streets of Jerusalem... and boys and girls will play in her streets” (Zechariah 8:4-5), before our very eyes.

Following the dramatic events of June 1967, Rav Shlomo Goren, then Chief Rabbi of the IDF, made changes to the nusach of Nachem to reflect the new reality of a unified Jerusalem, under Jewish sovereignty.

In the IDF Siddur he edited and published in 1970, Rav Goren wrote that the traditional liturgy is “not appropriate when Jerusalem is free and under Israel’s sovereignty.” Instead of the traditional nusach which is based on a text that appears in the Rosh, Rav Goren chose a text based on the Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachot 4:3; Ta’anit 2:2), and the Siddur of Amram Gaon and the Rambam, which limits the description of Jerusalem to “the city that is in sorrow, laid waste, and in ruin.” The more subtle language, Rav Goren felt, better expressed the new reality of a Jerusalem in Jewish hands.

Serving as Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel from 1973-1983, Rav Goren attempted to formally institute the changes he made to Nachem, but was unsuccessful. While his changes were minor, and closer to the original text as it appears in the Talmud Yerushalmi, they were controversial, with many leading authorities at the time opposing his move.

Rav Chaim David Halevi suggested more subtle changes, changing the text from present to past tense, replacing “the city that is in sorrow,” with “the city that was in sorrow,” and “she sits with her head covered,” with “she sat with her head covered” (Aseh Lecha Rav 1:14).

Rav Isser Yehuda Unterman opposed changes to the text of Nachem because the Old City of Jerusalem was full of synagogues in various states of destruction and disrepair, while at the same time full of churches and mosques (HaTzoeh, 8 Av 5729, p. 2).

Rav Ovadia Yosef opposed any changes to Nachem for two reasons: 1) Our prayers were composed by the Anshei Knesset HaGedola and we do not have the authority to make any changes to the text, and 2) the traditional text of Nachem is relevant even today, considering the physical and spiritual degradation of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount (Yechave Da’at 1:43).

Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik too felt that we have no authority to make changes to the text of Nachem, and the text, as is, is relevant even today. Rav Soloveitchik explained that according to the Rambam, Jerusalem shares the sanctity of the Beit HaMikdash. If the Beit HaMikdash is not standing, surely Jerusalem can be described as being “laid waste, scorned and desolate” (See the Orthodox Union’s Mesorah 7, Elul, 5752, p. 19).

The debate over Nachem reflects the very real challenge we face today, mourning the Churban in a rebuilt Jerusalem. May we merit to mourn properly, and see the fulfillment of the promise of our Sages: “All who mourn for Jerusalem will merit to witness her in her joy” (Ta’anit 30b).

Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel lives and teaches in Jerusalem, where he serves as Mara D’atra of Har Nof’s Kehilat Zichron Yosef
When the 17th of Tammuz normally comes around, we prepare for a change. For three weeks there will be no wedding parties, no bar mitzvah celebrations and a lessening of our social interaction with the wider world. This year, we hardly feel the change as tragically, this has been the reality for the last few months. Yet we must still strive to connect to the meaning of the Three Weeks within our current Covid-19 situation.

Normally the Three Weeks usher in a period where I will no longer be shaving, getting haircuts, listening to music, etc. However, this year it is different, as my father was niftar on the 27th of Sivan, so I was still in my shloshim when the Three Weeks began.

My personal mourning had now been joined by national mourning. The question is – which is more poignant? Personal or National?

Most people would say the personal – you cannot compare the loss of a loved one now to the loss of the Beit HaMikdash thousands of years ago. However, that is only if we think of the churban as a physical destruction of bricks and mortar.

What are we mourning? We are mourning the loss of opportunity of a connection, a relationship to Hashem. Ever since the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed, Hashem’s presence is no longer visibly and palpably sensed in our lives and in our world. When we had the Beit HaMikdash, we had that connection in Yerushalayim, which inspired the whole world. The Shechina dwelt amongst us, human life was on a different level, we could connect in a way that we do not understand. There was a deep relationship there.

When you lose a loved one – what are you mourning? You are mourning the loss of relationship; you are mourning the fact you can no longer connect with that person in the way you used to. We understand that their soul lives on in the Olam HaEmet (the World of Truth), but the way we relate as human beings of flesh and blood to each other, to our loved ones, to our parents, is through the physical world, so when they are no longer with us physically – we have lost the relationship.

National mourning is the same – we have lost the relationship, not with our father, but our Father in Heaven – Avinu SheBashamayim – our spiritual parent. Therefore, this year, I feel I can relate to this idea more than I used to – to understand what it means to lose the ability to have a relationship with someone you love deeply.

Our prayers at this time, and throughout the year, are for that relationship to be restored. Those are the tears of Tisha B’Av, the tears for the centuries that have seen that relationship damaged and tears for a desire for a relationship with Hashem and a return to those former times.

As we recite at the end of Eicha: והשיבנו ה’ אלקיתنو וswireנו ימים קדושים – “Bring us back to You, Hashem, and we shall return, renew our days of old.”

L’ilui nishmat Reuvain Mattityahu ben Elyakim Getzel

Rabbi Andrew Shaw is Chief Executive of Mizrachi UK
The Romans destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem 1,950 years ago. 1,950 years is a very long time, even in terms of the span of human history. Great empires have risen to dominate the world over this period but without exception, they have all crumbled and disappeared into the dustbin of history. Religions and beliefs arose and for a long time were popular and boasted millions of adherents. However, once again the bloom is off the rose for most of them.

We are living in a post-Christian era and vast areas of the world such as Europe, that formerly were the bastions of that faith, have now abandoned it in belief and practice. The god of secularism appeared to be dominant during the last century, spearheaded and abetted by the power of the atheistic and seemingly all-powerful Soviet Union. But that mighty colossus has also proven to be empty. Though there are those that still espouse the disproven theories of Marxism, real facts belie there is any truth or future in those theories and beliefs.

Nationalism as a goal and an ideal also seems to be on its way, as nations and peoples struggle to construct some sort of international order and economic interdependence. The world has changed greatly in terms of technology and social order over the past 1,950 years. But, in many respects, it has not changed at all.

The world hardly marks the disappearance and passing of previous governments and social orders. It does not celebrate days of defeat nor does it wish to remember the true and actual causes of those defeats. One of the most striking aspects of Jewish tradition is the fact that Judaism commemorates – with ritual, prayer and behavior – the most negative moments in Jewish history. It does so to remind us of the actuality of life and events. It does so to warn us of the consequences of evil and even erroneous behavior and policies. It does so that we shall not gloss over the parts of our story that are uncomfortable and even very negative.

If we are not aware of our defeats, there is no way we can ever plan to reach victory.

For if we are not aware of our defeats, there is no way we can ever plan to reach victory and accomplishment. The prime example of this attitude of truthfulness, no matter how painful, is found in the words of the prophets of Israel who foresaw the destruction of the Temple but also saw the eventual restoration and rebuilding of the Jewish people and Jewish life in the land of Israel.

I think it is because of this truthfulness and honesty that the prayers and Biblical readings of Tisha B’Av still speak to us in such a meaningful and emotional fashion. Like everything else that is Jewish and Biblical, it is not just a record of what happened to us long ago but rather a comment on our times, our situation and our challenges.

Over the past few decades, discussions have arisen both within and outside the Jewish religious world as to the place this day of mourning should have in our lives. The miraculous rise and success of the State of Israel has presented the Jewish world with enormous opportunities, but with enormous spiritual and physical challenges as well. After 1,950 years of mourning on this date, it is hard to imagine any change, yet the prophets did tell us this day would become a day of joy and rejoicing and no longer one of mourning.

We are not yet so privileged to be able to change and reverse the content and mood of the day. Too much has occurred to us and at too great a price, in our struggle to remain a separate and holy people, for this day to be stripped of its sad content. The lessons of the day and of the words of the great prophets of Israel still need to be reinforced within us personally and within our society.

The day demands of us loyalty to the G-d of Israel and to the Torah and traditions that have maintained us over this long span of time. It evokes memory and demands attention to the problems and failings still present in our lives and society. But it also points to a hopeful future and to comfort, consolation and better times.

Rabbi Berel Wein is Senior Rabbi of Beit Knesset HaNassi in Jerusalem and Director of the Destiny Foundation
The Secret of Consistency

The Mishna¹ tells us of the five tragedies we commemorate on 17 Tammuz. We remember the breaking of the luchos, the walls of Jerusalem being breached, an idol being placed in the Heichal, and a heathen king publicly burning an idol being placed in the Heichal, an idol being placed in the Heichal, the ultimate factor? What’s so significant about being common? If one has 1,000 shekels to give, he should give less to charity, he should give less to more recipients. Why? Because the more we do, the more actions we perform, the more it shapes who we are. As the Sefer HaChinuch writes constantly, we are influenced by what we do. And the more we do it, the more it conditions us to the value being expressed by that action.

This then, is the greatness of the common, the more common, and the significance of the Korban Tamid. This korban was a microcosm of our entire avodah. Day in, day out. Serving G-d each and every day of our lives. Chazal understood that once this symbol was taken away from us — along with all the other tragic events of the day — it was worthy of fasting.

Our job, in this dark time of the year, is to reinvigorate our day-to-day activities, to recognize that G-d loves the tadir, the common, and to persevere in our daily avodah. Davening each day, performing chesed for those in need, carving out time to learn Torah each and every day — these are the actions that will shape our hearts. Let it be His will that we not only learn the message of the Korban Tamid, but merit to actually offer it in the Third Mikdash, may it come speedily in our days.

¹ Ta'anit 26b.

1 Rabbi Shalom Rosner is a Rebbe at Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavne and Rabbi of the Nofei HaShemesh community

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency

The Secret of Consistency
As we proceed day-by-day through the Three Weeks (Bein HaMeTzarim), the sense of gloom and despondency over the loss of the Beit HaMikdash steadily intensifies. As Rav Soloveitchik points out, the various phases of the Three Weeks are likened – in inverse order – to the three-tiered structure of Jewish mourning. The year of mourning approximates the start of the period on 17 Tammuz, when (in Ashkenazic practice) we avoid all occasions of festivity. The 30 days of Shloshim are akin to the Nine Days when we do not take haircuts, eat meat or drink wine. Tisha B’Av, the “Black Fast” itself, mimics the Shiva, when we sit sullenly upon the floor, without shoes, awash in tears, not even greeting one another. Perhaps the ultimate depth of our despair is embodied in the reading of Megillat Eicha on Tisha B’Av night. Eicha (איכה) written by the Navi Yirmiyahu – eye witness to the destruction of the First Beit HaMikdash by the Babylonians – is the only one of the Megillot read solely at night. Ruth, Kohelet and Shir HaShirim are read in the morning hours, offering messages of love, light and optimism. Megillat Esther is recited both morning and evening, leading us in a path from impending doom and destruction to salvation and joyous celebration. But Eicha remains cloaked throughout in darkness – the seemingly endless darkness of the Exile.

Three references to איכה encapsulate both the emotions of this night as well as the underlying causes of the Churban. First, Moshe Rabbeinu laments: איכה – “How can I bear your struggles alone?” (Devarim 1:12). Moshe was never one to shirk from work or challenge, but he recognizes that in the final analysis, it is the nation that must carry the burden and not the individual. While we are fond of saying “great leaders make great nations,” Moshe, in his unparalleled wisdom, knew the truth is quite the opposite: A great people will invariably cause great leaders to emerge.

As the Gemara points out, we failed as a nation when we dismissed the Sages and neglected to properly educate our children, when we failed to call out the evil-doers, when we engaged in the widespread desecration of the Shabbat (Shabbat 119b), when we practiced rigidity rather than flexibility in the Law (Bava Metzia 30b) and, of course, when we engaged in cynical, baseless hatred (Yoma 9b). Only when the nation as a whole fails so miserably can a disaster as great as the Churban occur.

Then Yeshayahu wails (1:21), איכה – “How has this faithful city become like a prostitute!” Lusting after the practices of the nations, she sells out her principles to the lover who offers the highest bid. A harlot has no intrinsic identity, no unique character. She is a body (politic) for hire; her passions are directed solely by those who pay her fee. In spurning our true benefactor, our eternal soulmate, Israel forfeited G-d’s loyalty to us, leading to our destruction.

Finally, Yirmiyahu cries out in Eicha’s opening verse: איכה – “How did Yerushalayim become so alone, so like a widow?” Just as a woman who has lost her husband feels abandoned, deserted, defenseless, we left ourselves vulnerable to the insidious nations surrounding us. With the demise of our relationship with G-d – and our unwillingness to repent and rekindle that holy union – we became prey to our enemies. They sensed we no longer had our partner to guard and protect us, and so we were decimated.

Using the same letters of איכה (Bereishit 3:9), G-d calls out to Adam – איכה – Ayeka, where are you?! That first Adam replied, ואֵחָבֵא – And I hid. But we know we cannot escape, or hide, or avoid facing G-d. We must confront our actions, recognize our failings, and commit to correcting the national sins which resulted in our dispersion and degradation. Only then will Tisha B’Av truly become a Moed, and its dark countenance turned into a great and shining light.

Rabbi Stewart Weiss is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra’anana and the father of Staff Sgt. Ari Weiss z”l, who fell in a fire-fight with Hamas terrorists in 2002
Rav Soloveitchik famously draws a parallel between the three periods of mourning for close relatives and the three periods we find within the Three Weeks.

From the 17 of Tammuz, we refrain from haircuts, music and other joyous and festive activities, as one does during the 12 months of mourning for a parent. From Rosh Chodesh Av, more restrictions apply, relating to laundry, bathing, consuming meat and wine and some other joyful activities, in line with the period of shloshim.

Finally, Tisha B’Av itself is like the shiva – we sit on the floor, without greeting each other, we do not wear leather shoes and, of course we fast.

However, Rav Soloveitchik points out the obvious difference between the Three Weeks and the periods of mourning – they are in reverse! Whereas mourning over the passing of someone close – known as Aveilut Chadasha (new mourning) – occurs in order of most to least severe, the mourning of the Three weeks – Aveilut Yeshana (mourning of the ancient) – is practised from the least to the most restrictive, culminating with the height of our mourning. Tisha B’Av itself. By Aveilut Chadasha, grief is most intense with the passing, as the image of who we have lost is still in the front of our minds, and somewhat eases over time.

When it comes to Aveilut Yeshana, we need to prepare ourselves and gradually work up to the powerful emotions that accompany a true internalisation of the meaning of Tisha B’Av. It is impossible to turn it on immediately, in one instant.

That said, what are we working towards during the Three Weeks?

It is curious that when Rav Shimon Refael Hirsch, in Chorev, describes the gradual destruction of Yerushalayim and the Beit HaMikdash, he writes that the 10th of Tevet was the beginning of the destruction, the 17th of Tammuz the fall of Yerushalayim and Tisha B’Av the fall of Tziyon (Zion).

What does Rav Hirsch mean by “the fall of Tziyon” and why does he use that description for Tisha B’Av instead of “the fall of the Beit HaMikdash”?

The Kinot on Tisha B’Av conclude with a number of Tziyon Kinot – kinot that begin with the word Tziyon and, as Rav Soloveitchik describes, serve to shift our focus from remembering the destruction and ruins of Yerushalayim to remembering the glory of Yerushalayim before the destruction.

In a very real way, Tziyon is the beauty of what we once had. The embodiment of Am Yisrael as a shining beacon of Torah, justice and truth radiating from the centre of our existence, Yerushalayim.

Ultimately, Tisha B’Av must arouse in us a desire to do better.

It must motivate us to overcome and rectify the causes of destruction. But in addition to stirring in us the emotions of Zecher LeChurban – remembering the destruction, we must also achieve a state of Zecher LeMikdash – remembering the beauty of the Beit HaMikdash.

Only when we truly appreciate and internalise the magnificence of what Tziyon was, can we genuinely mourn its loss and seek to rebuild.

Rabbi Ari Posner is Rabbi of the Dianella Mizrachi Shul and Rosh Kollel of Torah MiTzion Perth
Crying and Yearning

Five Ideas to Connect to the Loss of the Beit Hamikdash Today

On Tisha B’Av, we’re asked to cry about a bygone era and yearn for an abstract Jewish future — difficult actions and feelings to compel in a generation of people for whom the Kotel, the outermost wall of the Beit HaMikdash, has always been the backdrop to some of their best family photos.

Our lives are so rich, both physically and spiritually. We are so content with our families, our homes, our businesses, our pleasures and our prosperity as to make the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash more than 2,000 years ago somewhat remote and of limited concern.

Few people truly mourn for the Beit HaMikdash. Even fewer truly feel the absence of the Shechina, the Divine Presence.

Because we have never experienced what we lost, it is hard for us to imagine what would be added to the world when the Beit HaMikdash is rebuilt on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

According to the Midrash (Tanchuma, Tzav 14):

G-d said to Yechezkel: “The study of the Temple structure is considered as being of equal merit to its building. So tell the people to study the Temple structure, and as a reward, I will consider their study as though they were actually building the Temple.”

When the Jewish people were in the Babylonian Exile, the Prophet Yechezkel was instructed to teach the people details of the Temple’s construction. The Radak (Yechezkel 43:11), says the people were told to construct a three-dimensional model of the Temple. By doing this, it brought into reality the idea that the Jews would eventually return to their Land and rebuild the Temple.

Here are five ideas/activities for learning about the Beit HaMikdash that once was and will, B’Ezrat Hashem, be built again soon:
Learn about the *korbanot* (offerings) which were brought to the Beit HaMikdash.

Learn about the various *keilim* (vessels) of the Beit HaMikdash, e.g. Menorah, Holy Ark, clothes of the Kohen, etc.

Learn about special *mitzvot* that applied during the times of the Beit HaMikdash, such as going up to Jerusalem three times annually, or other *mitzvot* such as *Bikkurim*, *Maaser* and *Hakhel*.

Learn about aspects of the service in the Beit HaMikdash which still apply today, such as *Birkat Kohanim* (the Priestly Blessing) and washing one’s hands before eating bread.

Construct your own 3D model of the Beit HaMikdash or complete a puzzle featuring the Beit HaMikdash.

And of course, add your own ideas too. If we understand that we are lacking a closeness to G-d, and that our whole lives could be on a much higher spiritual plane – and consequently give us much deeper pleasure and enjoyment than we have in our lives today – that may inspire us to yearn for a more fulfilling existence.

And in terms of crying for the loss of the Beit HaMikdash, for a higher spiritual reality we cannot really conceive, perhaps we can take a lesson from the Israeli paratrooper who was one of the first to touch the Kotel upon its liberation in 1967. When asked why he was crying, he replied: “I’m crying because I don’t know what I’m crying for.”
M any indirect forces shape our children’s values and raising a mensch is so much more complicated than only telling them what to do. Longitudinal studies that identify the core ingredients associated with raising an empathic child identify a subtle process typically present in such families.

Parents who raise children who become kind and charitable adults expose them to discussions that show respect for those with whom they disagree. Imagine a family sitting around a Shabbat table discussing an issue about which they feel passionately. Parents who show contempt or disrespect are conveying a very powerful message to their children. They are modeling an approach to conflict that includes disdain and contempt for those who view the world differently. Whether the discussion is about family members, friends, or the leadership of the local shul or yeshiva, showing respect for those with whom we disagree is a very potent lesson for children.

A crucial facet of this process is the parental promotion of perspective-taking in their children. It is common sense that children who are encouraged to see things respectfully – through the eyes of others, even those with whom we disagree – are getting an important lesson in one of the basic building blocks of empathy. Parents whose discussion style is associated with instilling the proper values in their children are also more likely to actively encourage their child’s participation in family discussions. These parents pull their children into discussions with adults and supportively challenge their child’s thinking in an atmosphere that is marked by respect for the views of others, including those of their child.

After giving a lecture that included a discussion of this topic, a Rabbi in the audience told me the following story. He had just taken a position as the leader of a shul that had had a rocky relationship with the previous Rabbi. He was shocked to hear that the son of one of his congregants had just become engaged to a non-Jewish woman. He met with the young man to understand how this happened and to try to dissuade him from his decision. The young man explained that all of his life, the conversation he heard around the Shabbat table was dominated by his parents’ bitter complaints about the previous Rabbi. When company came over, this too was a major topic of conversation. He asked the Rabbi: “How do you expect me to view this religion? I was a young, impressionable boy and my view of Judaism was mainly informed by the bitter anger my parents and their friends felt toward their spiritual leader. I see no reason to continue to belong to a religion that was so devalued by my parents and their friends.”

Who do you want your children to marry one day? Somebody who comes from a family where the views of others are dealt with respect, and where there is an effort to understand the opposite viewpoint? Isn’t that an essential building block of a good marriage? Were your future daughter-in-law or son-in-law exposed to a home environment that taught them to live with the grays?

There is a fascinating Rabbi Nachman story that explains the significance of the Torah being given in the arafel, in the mist. We acquire wisdom in the fog. “The people kept their distance but Moshe approached the fog where G-d was.”1 Rav Nachman explains this passage as having the following implication: “For when they saw the mist, the obstacle, they kept their distance.” But Moshe approached, into the obstacle, which is precisely where G-d was hidden.2

Even the most basic examination of the Talmud is an education in the core value of Jews being comfortable with uncertainty. How often in Talmudic discussions do we see a high level of comfort with concluding: ﴿למה (that is indeed a question) or ﴿שקית (we will have to wait for the coming of the Messiah to come to a conclusion about this issue). The Talmud tells us that the reason we adopt the opinions of the house of Hillel over the house of Shammai is that the house of Hillel was able to appreciate the perspective of the members of the house of Shammai and take that perspective into account in making their decisions.

Adapted from Balanced Parenting by Rabbi Raphael Pelcovitz and Dr. David Pelcovitz

1 Shemot 20:17. 2 Likutei Moharan, 115.

Dr. David Pelcovitz holds the Gwendolyn Administration at Yeshiva University and Joseph Straus Chair in Psychology and Jewish Education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University
A husband and wife are walking when suddenly he trips. “Oy!” she cries out. “Are you okay?! I hope you’re not hurt.”

“It’s okay. It’s okay,” he responds. “I’m fine.”

Let’s revisit the scenario. The same man and woman. The same street. Suddenly he trips and she cries out: “Klutz! What’s wrong with you? Can’t you even walk without tripping?”

What’s the difference between scenario #1 and scenario #2?

In the first, they are a newly-married couple. In the second, they have already been married for three years.

While this is an anecdote, it illustrates a critical point. When a couple begins a marriage, there is a sense of newness and excitement. They are anxious to see each other; they enjoy each other’s company. They are in the infatuation stage.

But that stage was designed to be short-lived. Their job is to now build the real bond of love. And while many couples do focus on the love in their marriage, they allow one area to slip: respect. And when respect slips, the relationship starts to fray. Sadly, it’s almost natural.

Dr. John Gottman, a renowned marital therapist, did an eye-opening study. He studied interactions between couples and then compared their reactions to other people.

To do this, he sat a husband and wife across from each other and videotaped them while they discussed certain issues. Then he asked the wife to step outside and asked another woman to come in. He then asked the husband to converse about a similar subject with this stranger. He then brought the wife back in and asked the husband to leave. Again, he introduced another man and asked the wife to have a conversation with this stranger.

Here is what he found: regardless of whether the couples were newly married or long-time veterans, over and over, they were less polite towards each other than they were to utter strangers. They were also quicker to argue and less likely to accept the opinion of their spouses, as opposed to that of someone they had never met before.

Why is this? One reason is that we are socialized to be polite. Since childhood, we’ve been trained to use our manners and be courteous, and we remain true to that — outside the house. The problem is that often, within our own homes, we forget how we are supposed to act.

Interestingly, the Rambam gives us a formula for a beautiful marriage.

“Our Sages commanded that a husband must respect his wife more than himself and love her as much as himself. Likewise, they commanded a wife to treat her husband with exceeding amounts of honor. If a couple does this, their union will be beautiful and praiseworthy. (Rambam, Hilchot Ishut 15:19)

The order the Rambam put things in is illustrative. “A man must respect his wife more than himself and love her as much as himself.” It’s respect first, and love second. This point becomes a major obstacle in many marriages. After a few months or a few years, the common courtesy and basic respect start to weaken.

Once the respect slips, the relationship starts to unravel.

Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier is a veteran educator and noted relationships expert who served as a high school rebbe for 15 years before creating TheShmuz.com, a popular website that dispenses weekly Torah inspiration to 10,000 people across the globe.
As parents, we love our children. We will do anything and sacrifice immensely to make them happy and to show them our love. And yet, if our children do something wrong, we punish them. It is not an easy thing to do, but we know it is best for our child in the long run.

The fact that the most tragic time in the Jewish calendar falls in a month called Av (father) is not a coincidence. It reminds us that even though we don't understand why we suffer so much and we do not see any possible good that can come from it, G-d is our Av, our Father who loves us. He would not decree suffering or allow horrible things to happen to us if it was not for our future good.

During the Holocaust, Rav Elchanan Wasserman answered his students’ questions about why they were suffering with the following parable:

"A man asked a farmer to teach him about farming. The farmer took him to his field and asked him what he saw. “I see a beautiful piece of land, lush with grass, and pleasing to the eye.” Then the visitor was stunned as he watched the farmer plow under the grass, turning the beautiful green field into a mass of shallow brown ditches.

“Why did you ruin the field?” he asked.

“Be patient. You will see,” said the farmer.

The farmer then showed his guest a bag sack full of plump kernels of wheat and asked, “What do you see?” The visitor described the nutritious, inviting grain. He then watched in shock as the farmer walked up and down the furrows dropping the kernels into the open ground and then covering the kernels with clods of soil.

“Are you crazy?” he said. “First you destroyed your field and now you ruined the grain?”

“Be patient. You will see,” came the answer.

Time went by, and the farmer took his guest out to the field where he saw straight rows of green stalks sprouting up from all the furrows. The visitor smiled and commented, “Now I understand what you were doing. You made the field more beautiful than ever. The art of farming is truly spectacular.”

“No,” replied the farmer. “We are not done. You must still be patient.”

More time went by and when the stalks were fully grown the farmer took a sickle and chopped them all down. The visitor stood in stunned silence as the stunning field became an ugly scene of destruction. He thought maybe things were turning for the better when he saw the farmer bind the stalks into bundles and decorated the field with them. But then he was bewildered again seeing the farmer beating and crushing the bundles until they became a mass of straw and loose kernels. The visitor learned not to get excited when he saw the farmer separate the kernels from the chaff and piled the grain into a huge hill. And sure enough, the farmer then took the beautiful grain to a mill where he ground it up into dust. The visitor could not hold back and complained: “You have taken grain and transformed it into dirt!” Again, he was told to be patient.

The farmer put the dust into sacks, brought it home, took some dust, mixed it with water, and formed it into the shape of a loaf. The visitor saw the perfectly formed loaf and was happy. But then the farmer lit the fire in the oven and put the loaf into it leading the visitor to scream, “It’s official. You are insane. After all that work, you just burned what you made!” The farmer replied again, “Did I not tell you to be patient?”

Finally, the farmer opened the oven and took out freshly baked bread with an aroma that made the visitor’s mouth water. The farmer sliced a piece for the visitor and as he watched the guest enjoy the bread, the farmer said, “Now you understand.”

“G-d is the Farmer,” Rav Elchanan explained. “We are visitors who do not understand the process. But when the process is complete and the final Redemption comes, we will understand it all.”

Our loving Father has blessed us to return to the Land of Israel and with the creation of the State of Israel – showing us that the final Redemption is on the way. As we mourn this Tisha B’Av, may we be comforted knowing that G-d is our Av and that when the final Redemption arrives we will understand how all of our sufferings are because of His love for the Jewish people.
JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY
TZURBA M’RABANAN LEARNING PROGRAM
NOW IN ENGLISH!
VOLUME 6 AVAILABLE SOON!

OVER 20,000 LEARNERS IN HUNDREDS OF COMMUNITIES ALL OVER THE WORLD

A systematic and concise learning method, from the Talmudic source through modern-day halachic application

Clear and concise introductions and a modern English translation alongside the original Hebrew text

Color-coded sections, icons and elucidation to guide the learner, in addition to in-depth essays and responsa to complement the learning

Cover 300 major topics in Shulchan Aruch, learning once a week during a four-year cycle

Tzurba M’Rabanan is available as a podcast on all major platforms, including iTunes, Spotify and Google

VISIT WWW.TZURBAOLAMI.COM TO ORDER BOOKS OR TO FIND A LOCAL SHIUR
My daughter Jennifer joined the Peace Corps soon after graduating from college.

The Peace Corps application process was an interesting one. Jennifer was asked to list three preferred countries, but ultimately they needed someone who was fluent in Spanish for an opening in Nicaragua, for that’s where they wanted to send her. Having grown up in the Southwest and having minored in Spanish in college, Jennifer was indeed fluent. But Nicaragua?

Weighed down by a large backpack, and with purse and straw hat in hand, Jennifer flew to Managua, where she was met by a Peace Corps employee who drove her to the administrative office.

First, there was a training period that involved living for two weeks with a host family while she learned the Peace Corps protocols and made preparations for the two-year placement. Jennifer requested an assignment where there hadn’t been any previous Peace Corps workers.

She didn’t want to fill someone else’s shoes; she wanted to blaze her own trail. That’s how she was posted to Las Palomas.

Jennifer had been living in Las Palomas for about four months when I knew it was time for a visit.

The flight from Miami to Managua was short and uneventful. In Managua, I transferred to a small prop plane; at least it was a twin-prop. There were two other passengers besides me.

The captain landed smoothly on a grass airstrip. Jennifer was supposed to meet me there, but I saw no signs of any waiting greeters. I walked over to the picnic table under the veranda – the closest thing to an edifice at the “airport” – and plopped myself down.

While I waited for Jennifer, I wondered what I’d do if she didn’t show up. We didn’t have an alternate plan. To my relief and immense gratitude, Jennifer soon came over to me, huffing and puffing, and almost knocked me over with her hug.

We walked down the path she had taken to get here. The trek to the bus stop was only the beginning of an arduous journey. Once we boarded the bus, we stood, waiting for two seats to open up. Passenger after passenger boarded and departed, live chickens under one arm and bags of food under the other.

After a torturous ordeal of several hours during which the bus snaked down rutted mountain roads, we finally arrived at our stop. How she knew that the wooden chair at the dirt-road juncture was our stop, I still haven’t figured out.

We hiked a mile up the muddy path until we got to a corner market. “Welcome to Las Palomas,” Jennifer announced with pride.

It’s a good thing she told me we had arrived because all I saw was a rickety one-room wooden shack with a hand-painted sign that said “Mercado.” We continued walking uphill until we stood looking up at her house, Jennifer beaming a smile of welcome.
The house was little more than a wooden box on stilts. It had two rooms, a living room and a bedroom. The mezuzah on the front door was surely the only one for hundreds of miles.

The kitchen – a fire pit and worktable with a thatched roof overhead – was outside. The bathroom was an outhouse situated down the hill.

Jennifer offered coffee. No espresso machine here. She took her machete and whacked a mesquite log until she had a bundle of kindling wood, put a metal pot on top of the chicken-wire grate, and boiled water for coffee. We took our two cups inside and were sitting at the table in her living room when we heard someone at the door.

Jennifer hopped up to greet the visitor. “Hola, Padre. Pase.”

My Spanish is a bit rusty, but I knew she was welcoming the preacher, not only because she referred to him as “padre” but because he was wearing the telltale clerical collar.

Jennifer quickly explained to me that the preacher was fascinated by her Jewishness. Neither he nor anyone else in the village of 670 residents had ever met a Jew.

When he found out Jennifer was Jewish, he begged for details of the Temple and the sacrifices. Jennifer told him that the Temple no longer existed, and therefore we were no longer able to offer the sacrifices.

To Jennifer’s bewilderment, the preacher first politely argued with her, and then grew increasingly agitated. He insisted that he read the Bible every day and knew all about the Temple and the Jews’ special duties as the Chosen People.

Jennifer calmed him down by telling him that her mother would be coming to Las Palomas in a few weeks. “She is very religious,” she informed him. “She will be able to explain.”

The man had been counting the days until my arrival. Now he was here, eager to speak with me. His Spanish was too rapid for me to fully understand, so Jennifer translated.

“The preacher knows that children aren’t as religious as their parents these days. He thought I was making up stories about the destruction of the Temple only because I had never gone to the Temple myself or watched the offering of sacrifices.”

The preacher said that since I was of the older generation, I could give him a firsthand description of the Holy Temple. Did the priests wear their vestments as described in the Torah? And could I please describe in detail all of the aromas?

I was dumbstruck. The priest, having grown up in Las Palomas, a village without electricity, had no exposure to the media. But certainly, the news of the Temple’s destruction had traveled to Las Palomas in the last 2,000 years.

The preacher sat across from me, looking intently into my face to determine if I too was telling the truth. I explained that the Babylonians had destroyed our Holy Temple, that it had been rebuilt 70 years later and destroyed again by the Romans about 400 years after that.

To my utter astonishment, the preacher started sobbing. I watched as he laid his head on his arms and cried from his very soul. Suddenly he jumped up and begged me agitatedly in Spanish to please tell him it wasn’t so, that the Temple still existed in Jerusalem.

Then, spent, he sat back down, his head on the table, and asked if we would give him a few minutes alone. Jennifer and I stepped outside, but through the paneless windows we heard his painful sobbing, then his pleading... to whom I wasn’t sure.

Eventually, the preacher came outside with his head lowered, wiping his tears on his sleeve. He couldn’t even say “adios” as he walked heavily down the path, his life forever altered.

That was a life-changing moment for me. If only I could cry for the destruction of our Holy Temple as the padre had. Every Tisha B’Av, I distinctly recall his tear-streaked face and reddened eyes, and even more his expression of genuine pain at hearing the tragic news that we no longer had our Holy Temple. I too now cry on Tisha B’Av.

How unfortunate that it took a preacher from Nicaragua to provide tangible inspiration, to show me how to mourn for the Temple.

A version of this article originally appeared in Ami Magazine.

Judy Waldman is a freelance writer and motivational speaker specializing in Emunah, special needs, and intermarriage as well as general Jewish topics.
The question of why the Holy Temple was destroyed and the Land left desolate was posed to the Sages and the prophets. None could explain until G-d Himself revealed that it was a result of having forsaken the Torah. The Talmud continues that the failure to listen to G-d’s voice and walk in the Torah’s ways refers to their failure to recite the blessings over the Torah.

Rabbeinu Yonah asks how this seemingly obvious fact – that the Torah was forsaken – could have eluded the Sages and prophets? To his question, we can add others. The Talmud in Yoma says that the First Temple was destroyed because of immorality, murder and idolatry. Why then, did Jeremiah mention only the failure to make a blessing over Torah study? Moreover, where did the Sages see in the verse itself that it refers to the failure to make a blessing rather than a total abandonment of the Torah?

Rabbeinu Yonah answers that in fact the generation learned Torah constantly and fulfilled the mitzvot. That is why the Sages did not recognize they had forsaken the Torah. But if so, how did they fall to such a level that they committed the three cardinal sins? Why didn’t their Torah learning protect them? To this G-d replied: their Torah learning was lacking, as seen from their neglect of the blessing over their learning.

One year I received an urgent call just before Yom Kippur from a woman in my congregation. Her husband had been told by his doctor that he was suffering from a condition that could prove life-threatening if he fasted. Nevertheless, he was determined to fast. I spoke to his doctor and consulted another observant doctor to confirm the diagnosis. There was no doubt that fasting would endanger his life.

I called the man in and explained to him that he must eat on Yom Kippur. He looked me straight in the eye and said, “Rabbi, you’re a young man and I’m about three times your age, well into my 70s. Since my bar mitzvah, I have not eaten on Yom Kippur, and I do not intend to start now.” I replied that I could not force him to eat on Yom Kippur, but that as soon as he left my office, I would instruct the gabbai never to give him another honor in our shul. When he asked why he deserved such treatment for being strict with respect to Yom Kippur, I told him we are prohibited from honoring idol worshipers.

“What idol worship am I guilty of?” he demanded to know. I explained, “The G-d of Israel has decreed that you must eat on Yom Kippur. If some other god has commanded you to fast, it is irrelevant to me if you call it Zeus, Kemosh or Yom Kippur – all idols are the same.”

G-d’s answer to Jeremiah revealed how people who studied and observed the Torah could fall to the depths of immorality, murder and idolatry. “They forsok My Torah” – not the Torah, but My Torah. They failed to hear G-d’s will expressed in the Torah; they failed to hear into My voice. And therefore they failed to walk in the ways of the Torah – they failed to make the Torah an all-encompassing guide.

All of this is symbolized by the failure to make a blessing prior to learning. The blessing begins, אשר קדשנו במצוותיו – the purpose of the mitzvot is to sanctify us and to inspire us to holiness.

The second blessing emphasizes that the purpose of the Torah is to make us יודעֵי שְׁמֶךָ – those who know and emulate G-d’s character traits in order to develop a complete Torah personality.

The purpose of the Land of Israel is to provide the most holy environment in which to observe the mitzvot so we can create a total Torah life for the Jewish people as a whole. And the third blessing emphasizes that G-d has chosen us from the nations of the world and given us the responsibility to become a nation of קומימ and a holy people. The blessing enjoins us not to merely hear the words, but to consider their implications.

The purpose of the Land of Israel is to provide the most conducive, holy environment in which to observe the mitzvot so we can create a total Torah life for the Jewish people as a whole. But when the Jewish people observe mitzvot perfunctorily, without the intention to live a complete Torah life, then the need for the Land is negated, and its physical destruction follows. That is the lesson G-d revealed to Jeremiah.

Rabbi Zev Leff serves as the Rav of Moshav Matityahu
Down
1. What is the name of the Shabbat following Tisha B’Av?
2. Tisha B’Av commemorates the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and what city?
4. How many hours is the fast of Tisha B’Av?
7. We are not allowed to wear shoes made of this material on Tisha B’Av.

Across
3. What is the name of the seudah (meal) we eat just before Tisha B’Av?
5. Deportation of the Jews of which Ghetto began on Tisha B’Av in 1942?
6. What is the Hebrew greeting prohibited to greet someone with on Tisha B’Av?
8. According to the Gemara, how many tragedies occurred on Tisha B’Av?
9. What Megillah do we read on Tisha B’Av?
Nearly 150 years of experience

Five generations of family heritage

Millions of bottles enjoyed

One commitment to quality

TEPERBERG
FAMILY WINERY SINCE 1870