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 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.

Rabbi Dov Lipman

Rabbi Dov Lipman is a former MK and the author of seven books about Judaism and Israel.