



Moor Lane More Torah

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The Jewish Year – A Cycle of Closeness

By Rabbi Namir Cohen

Looking at the progression of the Jewish year, we start with Rosh Hashana which is the time when the world was conceived, as we say 'Hayom harat olam'; it is also the conception of Am Yisrael, as we know that the slavery in Egypt stopped on Rosh Hashana; until then we were stifled and there was no room for growth. When the slavery finished, we had a very small nucleus - nurtured whilst still within the Egyptian nation and heavily influenced by the Egyptian culture - but it was protected and grew more independent through the wonders of the Makkot. That is represented by the sukkot which envelope us, as if inside the womb. Next comes Pesach with Yetziat Mitsrayim – the birth of Am Yisrael, when we became a separate entity; as it says that Hashem took out a Nation from within a Nation. They were like a baby which has independent existence but needs nurturing. The Jews went through an intensive course of self-perfection ending in Shavuot which combined bar/bat mitzvah and marriage; this created a special bond between us and Hashem. Then we come to the Three Weeks; now it seems as if the relationship is all over: The Bet Hamikdash is destroyed, the Shechina is no longer with us! Is this so?

I would like to suggest the contrary. A story is related about a prince whose father the king wanted to train for kingship; he had his son taught all aspects of monarchy

and finally felt that it would be beneficial for the prince to live amongst the common folk, and so he sent him to live with the peasants of a little village. The prince was a talented musician and spent his evenings playing beautiful melodies which the entire village would gather to listen to. When the time came for him to return to the palace, a farewell party was arranged and the villagers expressed their sadness that he was going. One peasant said that he wasn't sad, because he had realised that the prince would leave and so he had the prince teach him how to play. 'I'm not sad because I can play the same melodies.'

Similarly, the departure of the Shechina could be viewed as a sign of maturity and trust that Hashem felt He could leave us and we would cope. Of course, the Shechina left because of our sins, but Hashem would never have left, had He known that we could not cope.

The Chofetz Chaim says that when Hashem commanded Moshe to grab hold of the staff which had turned into a snake, Hashem was teaching him that if hardships come one's way, one shouldn't run away, but rather 'grab hold of the snake', harness the opportunity to look for Hashem and grow close to Him. Indeed, Moshe went beyond that and held tightly to the snake. As soon as he did that, the snake returned from being a snake – a threat - to being a stick – a support. In the same vein, if we understand that the hardship of the season of the Three Weeks is meant for us to come close to Him and search for Him, then we are able to 'turn the snake into a stick', by using the 'snake' of the Three Weeks to come closer to Hashem, and by this we will utilize fully the 'support' of Elul – the 'stick' of the special time in the year when the gates are open and closeness to Him is more easily attained.



Why Cry? *By Rabbi Yehiel Haddad*

As we observe the period of mourning for the בית המקדש which was destroyed thousands of years ago, one might ask: granted that this was indeed a great calamity at the time, why are we, today, mourning an ancient event?

Rabbi Abraham Twerski explains that we are not grieving over an event of the past. We grieve over the loss of the Divine Presence and the spiritual illumination that could have been ours today. The קודש הקדשים which was destroyed over two thousand years ago is not the reason for our mourning; rather we grieve for the קודש הקדשים that could have been built today but is absent. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Yoma 1:1) teaches us "every generation in whose time the sanctuary was not rebuilt is as guilty as the generation in whose time it was destroyed."

So, in essence what we are mourning is actually our low level of spirituality and our lack of readiness for the בית המקדש to be rebuilt. And this puts light on the way one should go about mourning during this period. Simple sadness and grief accomplish nothing. This period of the Jewish calendar should remind us that we could achieve spirituality today, and in Rabbi Twerski's holy words "if we don't, it is a result of our own dereliction."

To put it directly, now is the time to grow spiritually, to become closer to Hashem, and not to neglect our souls. Through this may we merit that the בית המקדש be built in our days, and the Three Weeks become a time for joy and rejoicing.



Pushed off or Rescheduled? *By Rabbi Meyer Rabinowitz*

This year the fasts of 17th of Tammuz and 9th of Av fall on Shabbat and are therefore pushed off to Sunday.

1. The following questions arise: if a boy turns bar mitzvah on the 18th of Tammuz or 10th of Av, does he have to fast?
2. Do the stricter halachot of shavua shechal bo [the week in which 9th of Av falls] apply this year?
3. If someone makes a brit for his son, is he, or the other baalei brit, required to fast?
4. Do any dinei aveilut [laws of mourning] apply on Shabbat (9th Av)?

The Avnei Nezer discusses whether a fast which has been pushed off (nidche) from the previous day is a tashlumin [compensatory] for the preceding day, or whether it bears no relation to the previous day, rather this is the new date for the fast this year. The requirement to fast for a boy who turns bar mitzvah on the 18th of Tammuz or 10th of Av depends on this question. If it is tashlumin, he would not need to fast since it is just 'repayment' for a fast on which he was not yet bar mitzvah. If, however, it is completely pushed off, he would need to fast, since this is the new date for the fast. He writes that this all depends on the dispute of Maran and Rema if any aveilut apply on Shabbat when 9th of Av falls on Shabbat. According to Maran no aveilut applies whatsoever. According to Rema, there are dinei aveilut for things which are not public (b'tzin'a). It seems that Maran holds that it is completely pushed off and therefore no aveilut at all applies on Shabbat, whereas Rema holds it



is tashlumin and therefore Shabbat will have some dinei aveilut.

The same dispute will affect whether there is a 'shavua shechal bo' in such a year; it would depend on whether the fast is completely pushed off or if it is tashlumin. Maran brings two opinions in this regard; however, the halacha is like the first opinion (stam v'yesh), that there is no 'shavua shechal bo' in such a year.

In Shulchan Aruch 559.9 Maran writes that in a year where 9th of Av is nidche, a person making a brit may break his fast at mincha and need not continue the fast till nightfall, even though in a normal year he has to complete his fast. Mishna Brura writes that the same applies to the other fasts. Here we see that Maran considers a 'nidche' fast to be more lenient.

The Gemara in Megillah writes that Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi wanted to abolish the fast of 9th of Av in a year when it was nidche. Although the Halacha is not like this view, some see a proof from this statement of Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi that a 'nidche' 9th of Av is more lenient than other fasts.

On the other hand, the Gemara in Taanit quotes R' Yochanan as saying that had it been up to him, he would have fixed the fast on the 10th of Av every year, since most of Bet Hamikdash was burnt on that day. Again, we don't follow this view, but this would bolster the strictness of 'Tisha be'av nidche'.



Guest Contributor *Rabbi Y.C.D. Cohen*

Halachot and Minhagim of the Three weeks and Nine Days for Sefardim

We are grateful to Rabbi YCD Cohen who has compiled these Halachot. Footnotes by Rabbi Stamler show major areas where the Halacha for Ashkenazim is different.

The minhag is not to hear music during Three Weeks.

We do not say Shehechianu during the Three Weeks; some allow it on Shabbat, but it is forbidden to wear new clothes after Rosh Chodesh.

Haircuts¹ are permitted in the Three Weeks, but some avoid it in majority Ashkenazi areas, so as not to appear different. The main Halacha is that haircuts are forbidden only during 'shavua shechal bo' [the week in which the 9th of Av falls] - this does not exist this year when the fast is pushed off to Sunday, however since the 9th of Av is on Shabbat, one should avoid haircuts on the Friday erev Shabbat Chazon, so one enters the fast unkempt. Cutting nails is permitted before 'shavua shechal bo', especially if they protrude beyond the skin.

We wash clothes and wear washed clothes² until 'shavua shechal bo' - so this year it is permitted all week to Shabbat Chazon. On the fast of the 9th of Av we cannot wear washed clothes.

The main Halacha is that Sefardim wash themselves³ in the nine days and only stop for 'shavua shechal bo', which does not apply this year. The Ben Ish Chai's minhag is to avoid washing in the 9 days like Ashkenazim.

Meat and wine⁴ - we avoid meat and wine from the 2nd of Av to the 10th of Av⁵ inclusive, but we eat meat on Rosh Chodesh Av. This year there are no restrictions at all (even music) after Tisha Be'av, which falls on the 10th of Av.⁶

Some have the minhag to say Tikkun Rachel every afternoon of the Three Weeks (Arizal). This was also common in Ashkenazi circles in the past.



2. Forbidden during the Nine Days
3. Forbidden during the Nine Days
4. Forbidden during the Nine Days including Rosh Chodesh
5. Nine Day restrictions continue until Chatsot on 10th of Av
6. Meat and wine are forbidden on the evening after the fast [Rabbi Eider writes that music is also forbidden.]

1. Forbidden during the Three Weeks



Is there another Yerushalayim?

By Rabbi Shmuel Oppenheimer

The Shabbat immediately after Tisha Be'av is known as 'Shabbat Nachamu' (Shabbat of Comforting) after the haftarah that it is customary for us to lein, "Be comforted, be comforted my people, says Hashem your G-d. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem...". It is also the first of the seven weeks of consolation which follow the fast of Av and the previous three weeks of mourning over the destruction of the Holy Temple.

There are a number of questions to be raised. Firstly, what is behind this sequence; first having three weeks of mourning and then seven of consolation, with the weekly haftarot representing this theme. Why could we not have had the comfort already before the fast of Av; why only now? And furthermore, what is indeed the comfort that we are given?

Rav David Sperber zt"l in his sefer *Michtam L'David* brings from the sefer *Avodat Yisrael* (by the famed Koznitzer Maggid, Rabbi Yisrael of Koznitz, 1740-1814) that Yerushalayim in its heyday signified shelemut or completeness (shalem) through each and every one of us being united together performing Hashem's will with fear and trepidation. However, ever since we have been displaced from our Land, and we became unable to go and bask in the Shechina in Yerushalayim, through our sins, the light of the Shechina was unfortunately hidden from us. Thus, each of us must work hard to try to strengthen themselves with their service of Hashem until they reconnect with the idea of what the ultimate Yerushalayim represented - completeness.

Says Rav Sperber, once we succeed in serving Hashem in this way, then we will merit the ultimate rebuilding, with the rebuilding of the Temple. This is drawn from the passuk, "Yerushalayim when rebuilt is like a city which was created together". Through the unification of Klal Yisrael and their awakening of love and fear together, then Yerushalayim will be rebuilt.

Outside of Eretz Yisrael (Chutz L'aretz) is like a courtyard when compared to Eretz Yisrael, as the passuk says "In the courtyards of the house of Hashem, inside me Yerushalayim" meaning that even whilst stationed in Chutz L'aretz, still, inside me, in my very inner self, lies Yerushalayim. How is this so? Says Rav Sperber, there is a physical geographical Yerushalayim, and there is also a "Yerushalayim Levavit" – a Yerushalayim in one's heart. This is what the Navi is referring to when he says, "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem" meaning the heart which resides inside each one of us – which is inside of us throughout our exile, whilst we are just in the courtyard of Hashem.

Let us take this a little further. We asked why only after the Fast of Av is this consolation given to us. I heard from Rabbi Gershon Miller that the very comfort is "speak to the heart of Jerusalem," but this 'heart' is only created during the previous three weeks of mourning. Through mourning, only through mourning, is a Lev Yerushalayim created. And it is indeed this Lev Yerushalayim that we created, which is the comfort.

"Kol Hamitabel al Yerushalayim zoche v'roeh b'simchata" – "One who mourns over Jerusalem merits and sees its joy" [Ta'anit 30b]. The commentators ask, surely it should say 'he will', in the future tense, see the joy? Why does it say 'sees' in the present tense? Through what we have explained above, this can also be understood: through building a Lev Yerushalayim inside ourselves, we actually see immediately - to some degree - a comfort, through our Lev Yerushalayim.



Nachamu Nachamu Ami: Why Two Consolations?

By Rabbi David Schlama

Why does Midrash Eichah write: "Israel sinned doubly, were stricken doubly, and will get comforted doubly"?

The Keli Yakar [Devarim 4.26] explains that when a Jewish person distances himself from Hashem, he always does so by exploring or adopting foreign cultures. That is the double offence to Hashem: firstly admiring empty schemes and secondly having them compete with His Torah.

The consequence was [and still is, in less apparent ways] to be given over to the hands of the people and cultures we followed. The Dubno Magid compares this to a teacher who has a good and a bad pupil, and when the good one misbehaves, he orders the bad one to hit him, which

is a double humiliation. That was Churban Habait by the Bnei Edom.

The Nechama is to restore the former prestige of Am Hashem as the chosen people, not as a successful component of foreign societies, and hence to display the emptiness and failure of all of the world's substitutes for Torah.

Humbling the proud and exalting the humble: this is a double blow to all those who caused the world to forget Hashem throughout history, using values, convenience, and entertainment as means of influence.

We might gain a lot by keeping this in mind during the holiday period, firmly and proudly holding on to our spiritual belongings. As explained above, this surely brings us closer to the great Nechama.



The Three Weeks and Us *By Rabbi Moishe Wieder*

The days leading up to Tisha Be'av, and of course Tisha Be'av itself, can sometimes be a little confusing. What is it exactly we are mourning? Is it that we are remembering the painful times and events in our history? If so, what relevance does this have to our lives today? Are the Three Weeks and Tisha Be'av days of remembrance supporting the mantra "never forget", or do these days contain a deeper striving, relevant to our growth as Jews every day of our lives?!

Rabbi Pinchos Roberts Shlita, in his sefer *Timeless Seasons*, shows us the essence of what our experience of these days could, and perhaps should, be.

The Yalkut on Megillat Eichah records a fascinating conversation between the prophet Yirmiyah and the Jewish People in which an arrangement is made where we will mourn the destruction of our two Temples at night and Yirmiyah during the daytime. What is the meaning of this cryptic Yalkut? The sefer Da'as Sofer explains as follows. The terms "night" and "day" are not meant to be taken literally. Rather, night represents our times of distress; personally, and collectively. When our innocent brothers are ambushed and attacked in their own homes in Israel, when those who we love and care for meet difficult times, chalilah, we can all feel in the depths of our hearts the groan..." Galut...We need the redemption NOW!" However, chasdei Hashem, during times of joy, plenty and success; when everything we seem to touch, as a nation and personally, seems to turn to gold; when we see a nation thriving, growing in numbers and taking leaps and bounds in their health, wealth and spirituality, what then? Are we expected to experience a sense of loss during times when we feel anything but! This, the Da'as Sofer explains, was the arrangement between Yirmiyah

and the Jewish People. At times like these, it would be Yirmiyah who would mourn. He was on the spiritual level to appreciate that no matter what bracha we saw in our lives, the gulf between where we were spiritually, and the potential level of achievement that would inevitably be experienced with the presence of our Temples, was always apparent to him. Hence, he could mourn in the "day".

While this arrangement does seem to make sense, it does not seem to be at all an ideal one. We are all capable, upon introspection and contemplation, of appreciating the spiritual lack we have without our holy Bet Hamikdash. The lack of Korbanot to cleanse us from the grime of sin; the lack of concentrated Shechinah in our midst making our relationship with Hashem ever more tangible; the lack of the three Chagim spent in Jerusalem basking in all this spirituality...

This is an area of the avodah of these times which is very much about the future, not just the past. If we as a people develop a sense of longing for such spiritual growth, in actual fact, we are very nearly there.



Seeing The Geula

By Rabbi Aaron Gillis

The right to see a miracle is not automatic: as Lot fled for his life from the destruction of Sedom, he was warned not to look back at what was happening. Why this warning? The answer is that he was not being saved in his own merits, rather in that of Avraham. Therefore, he was not allowed to see the destruction of Sedom and the miracles of his salvation,

as they were not in his own merit.

This explains our daily prayer "Vetechezna eineinu beshuvecha leTzion" – may our eyes see Your return to Tzion. We are praying that we should merit to see the geula with our own eyes; however, we will only be able to see this if it is indeed in our merit, and we daven that it should be so. As we say this, we should realise that if we really want the geula, we have to correct our actions, so that it should be in our own merits. May we be zoche to greet and to see with our own eyes Mashiach tzidkenu bimhera beyamenu!

וְתַחֲזִינָה עֵינֵינוּ בְּשׁוּבוֹךְ לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים