

## Chodesh Av: Focus on Faith

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Judaism teaches that a name reflect the essence of a thing. What is the meaning behind the month of *Menachem Av*?

The Beis Halevi explains that the second temple was destroyed because of the *tzedokim* who didn't believe in the veracity of the rabbis and explained the Torah according to their natural understanding. This was the root cause of the *churban*. We know it was baseless hatred that caused the destruction. What does this have to do with the *tzedokim*?

The Leket v'halibuv explains that it was the baseless hatred and irreverence that the *tzedokim* had towards the rabbis that caused them to refuse to accept what they interpreted. This brought about the *churban*.

The Midrash says the destruction came as a result of a lack of *kibud av veim* (honoring ones parents). This is why the descendants of Esav whose ancestor showed great respect for his father were able to vanquish the Jewish people. The Meshech Chochma explains that when a child denigrates his father he mocks him not only as an individual but as a link to the generations. The twelve month mourning period is unique only for a parent because we are mourning not only the loss of the parent but the chain to Sinai. The root of the *churban* was the fundamental breakdown in the father/son tradition.

In parshat Kedoshim, Rav Hirsh explains that it first says, "*Kedoshim tiheyu*," (You shall be holy) and then it says "*Ish aviv v'imo tirayahu*," (You shall fear your father and mother) followed by "*Ve's Shabososai tishmoro*" (And you shall keep the Shabbat). In order to understand limitations and restrictions the child must learn to fear his parents. Then he can transfer this awe to his relationship with Hashem. When a Jewish child sees his parents keeping Shabbat he learns from their example to reign in his will before Hashem.

Man seeks the great ultimate root of all being. He tries to understand the origin of life and he finds it in Hashem. In so doing he also discovers his parents. There are three partners in the creation of man. Our parents are our point of origin. They brought us into the world. Through our relationship with them we strengthen our relationship with Hashem. Standing in front of ones parents with awe and admiration is as if standing before Hashem. Working on our relationship with our parents is working on our connection with Hashem.

Hashem chose to rest his *Shechina* in Binyamin's portion because he didn't have a part in the sale of Yosef and never caused his father any pain. Likewise, during the time of the second temple, Binyamin's stone was missing and the sages went to Dama ben Nesina who refused to wake his father. Hashem was hinting to the people that it was

this aspect of Binyamin, the model of *kibud av*, that was missing.

The Torah tells us, "As a father chastises his son so does Hashem chastise us." The month of Av is a time to work on *kibud av*. In so doing we will reinforce our relationship with *mesorah* and with Hashem.

It says, "When Av comes we must lesson our joy." Similarly it is written, "When Adar comes we must increase our joy." The Chazon L'moed points out that we equate Av with Adar because there's a connection between them. The very reason we lesson our joy in Av is the reason we increase our joy in Adar. The miracle of Purim happened in a way that was hidden. So too in Av Hashem concealed his face. We mourn the exile but it was this aspect of *hester panim* (that He hid Himself) that ultimately brought about the joy of Purim. Our happiness is sensing Hashem's presence even within the pain of Av. It's recognizing that Hashem is very much with us although we may not discern it outright.

At the time of the *churban*, the *keruvim* (the cherubs atop the ark) embraced. It was as if Hashem was reaching out to us at the lowest depths and assuring us that His love for us would endure. Menachem Av, the month when we feel the most distant from Hashem, is when He comforts us, "I remain your caring father."

## Megilat Eicha: Hope and Grief

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

In Megilat Eicha, the Jewish people are called *Bat Zion*. *Zion* means distinct or distinguished. We betrayed *Zion* by the wrong choices we made and by our lack of response to what we could have been. During the first temple there were twice as many prophets as those who left Egypt. A prophet can pull down the natural barriers that conceal the presence of Hashem. We were held accountable for living with such spiritual grandeur and ignoring it and Hashem punished us by sending us darkness. And in fact, we never returned to the level we had been.

The *Beit Hamikdash* was called *hadom raglov*-the resting place of Hashem's feet. Feet come in direct contact with the earth and take a person from place to place. Hashem's feet is His *midat hamalchut* (attribute of kingship), the way he brings His *malchut shamayim* (divine rulership) into this world and the way his thought is translated to speech and deed. The *beit hamikdash* was the place of *malchut shamayim*. The forces of evil enticed us to sin and we were spiritually weakened. There was no mercy because that would've kept us where

we were. Suffering stripped away our layers of external consciousness, the arrogance, the desire, and the evil vices, until we were left to face our inner selves.

There were two things that were the focus of Hashem's anger as is described in the verses. The first were all of our physical fortifications. We thought we could protect ourselves. The second was the government itself. The sources of strength that the Jewish people relied on were torn away. They had to realize that they were too invested in human power.

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The battle over Jerusalem was supernatural. Hashem responded according to our actions. He fought on the side of the enemy. They were like a rod in His hand. Our evil *middot* had to be forcibly ripped away from us so that we would mourn what we had become.

The outpouring of joy and the celebrity song of the enemies sounded like our Hallel on Yom Tov. Song rests in a higher place than words. The world of *ruchniyut* can be grasped more through song than words, because

words are limited by the human mind which is limited by our observational powers. The songs of the nations are their soul. The *ruchniyut* of our songs which were already destroyed from within was captured by the enemy so that their song was heard in the *Beit Hamikdash*. Hashem gave us time. Repentance could've changed things. He stretched the line. He wanted us to return. He didn't want to destroy us. But in the end he could not hold his hand back. All the lines were crossed and the borders had to fall.

Our outer tragedy was a reflection of our inner brokenness. On *Tisha b'av*, we weep for all the lost expectations, for failing to return, and for succumbing to the evil vices of the *yetzer hara*. We must ask for mercy for ourselves and our children's souls. We must peel away all the negative *middot* and all the barriers blocking us from Hashem. And in doing so, may we merit the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash* speedily in our days.

## Mourning Over The Real Jerusalem

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Beinish Ginsburg

The Gemara in Tannis writes, "Kol hamis-abul al Yerushalayim zoche v'roya b'simchata"-All who mourn over Jerusalem merit to see its joy" Our Sages question why the present tense is used in the Gemara. Should it not say "yizke v'yirah" in future tense? In addition, we find that Tisha B'av, the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, is called "moed"-a holiday. How can we understand this?

When Yaakov was informed of Yosef's supposed death, he sat in mourning, yet was not comforted, for in truth Yosef was still alive and Hashem only grants the blessing of shikcha-forgetfulness, to those who truly suffer a loss. Based on this principle, the Achronim write that there is a kernel of joy in our mourning the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. The fact that we still mourn and refuse to be comforted, proves that on a certain level, Yerushalayim is still alive, it is there but dormant, and we hope that very soon we will regain what we have lost. Therefore Tisha B'av is called moed. Our very act of mourning is a sign of hope for future redemption. We believe that there

is a Yerushalayim in heaven waiting for the right moment to descend. That is why the language of the Gemara is present tense. Our mourning shows confidence and belief that the glory that was once will eventually return.

Similarly, Rav Yaakov Emden explains the paragraph in bentching, "Rachem na..al Yerushalayim irecha-Have mercy on your city Yerushalayim. One does not normally ask for mercy for something that does not exist. This proves that the holiness of Yerushalayim and the Beit Hamikdash is still there. Physically it is gone, but its spiritual potential is still alive, yet dormant, waiting to be revitalized anew.

From its earliest beginnings, Yerushalayim was associated with Torah study and righteous people. The Midrash explains that the name Yerushalayim is a combination of two names given by two great righteous men. Avraham called it "Yirah" and Shem called it "Shalem". Har Hamoriah, the holiest spot in Yerushalayim, comes from the root word, "horoah"-to teach, signifying

that this city was the center of Torah and spiritual growth.

The Tosfos in Bava Basra explains the idea of maaser sheni-where a Jew needed to eat his maaser in Yerushalayim. In a sense, he was being forced to make the trip to the holy city and stay there a bit. Why? The Torah explains that he should learn to fear Hashem. Tosfos writes that Yerushalayim was the nerve center of *ruchniyut*. When a Jew reached the holy city he could not help but be affected by the fountain of spirituality that poured forth from the Beit Hamikdash, the Sanhedrin, and the great yeshivas and batei medrash. Therefore, when we mourn for Yerushalayim, we mourn this loss of spirituality and the destruction of the heart and epicenter of Torah.

We need to think about the great potential of holiness and spirituality that was once the essence of Yerushalayim, and grieve over the great loss we suffered. In the merit of our recognition of the magnitude of our loss, may Hashem will have mercy on us and rebuild the ruins of Yerushalayim.