

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."

The Nine Mourning Days

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tzipora Heller-Gottlieb

We measure time through the changes we observe in the physical atmosphere such as rotations and evolutions. All physical change has a spiritual cause. The Ramchal explains that Hashem created the world as a conduit through which He would relate to mankind. In earlier times people could read the constellations and see what would happen in the future. Av is the month in which the *tziruf* (permutation) of Hashem's name is backward. The Nine days correspond to the ninth month of pregnancy when the child is fully developed and is almost ready to enter the world. Much

like the labor pains of birth, the *ikvesa d'Mashiacha* herald the coming of the redemption.

When we lost the two *batei mikdash*, we lost the merit of the avot and we received our just punishment. The destruction was a statement-We weren't holding there. We lost Avraham's chesed because promiscuity is about taking and objectifying. We lost Yitzchak's devotion because if you're bound to Hashem you can't worship idols. We lost Yaakov's truth because if you look at the entire picture you cannot stoop to murder. In the Nine Days we should

be acknowledging the wrongs we did and seeking a path to repentance.

In *Shir Hashirim* it says, "I'm asleep but my heart is awake." The commentators explain that the heart is the spirit of prophecy. Prophecy means hearing Hashem's words and it is the outcome of deveikut-cleaving to Hashem. Rambam points out in Moreh Nevuchim that what life is for is deveikut and a person who does it right can attain prophecy which is the ultimate expression of connection. We are asleep but our collective heart is

Continued on Page 2



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Continued from Page 1

awake. We have conscientious recognition when things are not right. People want meaning and connection to Hashem but they cannot find Him because they are distracted.

We are meant to emulate the *middot* of Hashem who is the ultimate giver. Ask yourself -Am I a giver or a taker? Rav Dessler says this can be applied to everything in life. In marriage it's- Do I want to give, do I want to bring out what's best in the other person and help build them or is my whole objective- What can that person do for me? So too at work- Do I want to do what I'm doing successfully and well, or do I want to just get my money and leave? Am I eating to strengthen my body so I can serve Hashem or is it just to satiate my desires?

The *Baal Haleshem* explains that everything in this world has a bond that connects it to

Hashem. Nothing can exist without Him and there's nothing that's autonomous. All of creation was created chaser- lacking something. We are in this world to fill that chaser. As we get closer to the end there will be more lack and greater trials in emunah. We have to hold on. This is true on an individual and national level. The Gra discusses stages in the process of redemption and that before the final geulah there will be a partial return to the land. Living in Eretz Yisrael is going to bring to the fore what we lack. We like security, we're ok with leading our lives without Hashem and Hashem says- You'll come here and you'll see that you can only live your life with Me. That's the first step towards bringing geulah. It's actualized by keeping Shemitta and the mitzvot hateulyot b'aretz which lift the curtain and show us Hashem's intervention.

In Av, our Father (av) seeks His children. He doesn't want us to continue floating through

life aimlessly. He's bringing us to a point where we are compelled to look for Him with sincerity and emunah.

The destruction happened because instead of seeing all of the parts of the body as working together each of us saw ourselves separately. You could disagree with another person but you could still love and respect him. You could see people promoting wrong ideas and feel compassion, not hatred for them. The enormous separation within is what is preventing the bet hamikdash from being rebuilt. The second bet hamikdash was built in the merit of Klal Yisrael who is like a body with many limbs. No one is more or less a part of the body. If we want to rebuild the bet hamikdash we must work on increasing unity.

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, "horah"-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.