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CONFRONTING THE SINS OF DESTRUCTION

**Dedicated by Rabbi Doniel Z. Kramer in memory of his parents,
Rabbi Meyer and Rose Kramer of Philadelphia PA**

הרב מאיר בן הרב חיים מנחם ז"ל ורייזל בת יהודה לייב ע"ה



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INTRODUCTION: HASHEM’S EMBRACE IN OUR DARKEST MOMENTS

The Gemara, *Yoma* 54b depicts the powerful moment of Titus entering the sacred space of the Mikdash Hashem. Upon entering the Kodosh Hakadashim, he immediately recognizes the Keruvim situated on top of the Aron:

אמר ריש לקיש בשעה שנכנסו נכרים להיכל
ראו כרובים המעורין זה בזה הוציאון לשוק
ואמרו ישראל הללו שברכתן ברכה וקללתן
קללה יעסקו בדברים הללו.

Reish Lakish said: When the gentiles entered the sanctuary, they saw the Keruvim hugging one another. They took them to the market and said, “The Jewish people, whose blessing is a blessing and whose cursing is a curse, should engage in these matters?”

Titus takes these Keruvim to the market and uses them to mock the Jewish people; to call attention to our hypocrisy — that we don’t tolerate any idol worship, and here, in our Mikdash, there are idols.

The Keruvim are placed in the holiest place, a space from which Hakadosh Baruch Hu communicates directly with Klal Yisrael. Their presence within the deep recesses of the Mikdash, represents the intimate nature of our connection with Hashem. The Keruvim are two angelic cherubs that face one another.

וְעִשִּׂיתָ שְׁנַיִם כְּרֻבִים זָהָב מִקְצֵה תַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם
מִשְׁנֵי קְצוֹת הַכַּפֹּרֶת. וְעָשִׂה כְּרוֹב אֶחָד מִקְצֵה
מִזֶּה וְכְרוֹב אֶחָד מִקְצֵה מִזֶּה מִן הַכַּפֹּרֶת תַּעֲשֶׂהוּ

אֶת הַכְּרֻבִים עַל שְׁנֵי קְצוֹתָיו. וְהָיוּ הַכְּרֻבִים
פְּרָשֵׁי כַנָּפִים לְמַעַל סִכְכִּים בְּכַנְפֵיהֶם עַל
הַכַּפֹּרֶת וּפְנֵיהֶם אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו אֶל הַכַּפֹּרֶת יִהְיוּ
פְּנֵי הַכְּרֻבִים.

Make two cherubim of gold—make them of hammered work—at the two ends of the cover. Make one cherub at one end and the other cherub at the other end; of one piece with the cover shall you make the cherubim at its two ends. The cherubim shall have their wings spread out above, shielding the cover with their wings. They shall face each other, the faces of the cherubim being turned toward the cover.

The Gemara in *Yoma* 54a tells us that the *olei regalim* would get to see the Keruvim:



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Yaakov Glasser at
<https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-yaakov-glasser>

אמר רב קטינא בשעה שהיו ישראל עולין לרגל מגללין להם את הפרוכת ומראין להם את הכרובים שהיו מעורים זה בזה ואומרים להן ראו חבתכם לפני המקום כחבת זכר ונקבה.

Rav Ketina said: When the Jewish people would make their pilgrimage for the festivals, [the kohanim] would roll up the curtain and reveal the Keruvim who were hugging one another and say, "look at your love in front of the Omnipresent like the love of a male and female."

This Keruvim are a symbol of our majestic relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

However, the Gemara in *Bava Basra* 99a tells us that the position of the Keruvim is dependent on the loyalty of Klal Yisrael to the Torah:

כיצד הן עומדין רבי יוחנן ור' אלעזר חד אמר פניהם איש אל אחיו וחד אמר פניהם לבית ולמ"ד פניהם איש אל אחיו הא כתיב (דברי הימים ב ג, יג) ופניהם לבית לא קשיא כאן בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום כאן בזמן שאין ישראל עושין רצונו של מקום.

How did they stand? This is the subject of debate between Rav Yochanan and Rav Elazar. Once said they faced one another and one said that they faced the Sanctuary. According to the opinion that they faced one another, doesn't it

say (Divrei Hayamim II 3:13) "They faced the Sanctuary"? This is not a contradiction. [They faced each other] when the Jewish people were following the will of the Omnipresent, [they faced the Sanctuary] when the Jewish people were not following the will of the Omnipresent.

The period of the *churban* was clearly an era in which the Jewish people were not following Hashem's will, resulting in its ultimate destruction. However, upon Titus' entrance, the Keruvim were in a position of embrace. Why would the Keruvim be discovered in an interlocking hug at a time of such dissonance between G-d and the Jewish people?

The *Bnei Yisaschar*, Av Ma'amar 3, explains that when a spouse is about to embark on a lengthy trip, there is a halachic obligation for the couple to solidify their connection by increasing the amount of time they spend together. Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Am Yisrael are compared to a loving couple. True, the experience of *churban* entails a distancing of their connection. However, explains the *Bnei Yisaschar*, before that alienation takes place, there is a final proverbial

"hug." The Keruvim embrace because Hakadosh Baruch Hu is showing our nation, that despite the experience of distance, the foundation of our relationship remains eternally connected.

Tisha B'Av is a day that we concentrate and focus upon the tragedies of Jewish history. The past number of months have certainly added to the long list of challenges throughout our history, as we have lost so many precious members of our people to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the toll it has taken on the tefilah, Torah, and the emotional and economic wellbeing of so many is staggering. Tisha B'Av is a day to confront the essence and impact of those challenges. Yet it is also described as a *moed*, a festival. It is a day to recognize that with all of the challenge, there remains an eternal hug of promise from the Ribono Shel Olam — that the Jewish people will ultimately persevere.

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THE MUSIC OF TISHA B'AV AND THE MELODIES OF THE SPANISH-PORTUGUESE NUSACH

It is not customary to associate Tisha B'Av with music, but even the "dry" recital of Kinot in an Ashkenaz synagogue is punctuated by the moving musical interplay in the kinah contrasting "*be-tzayti miMitzrayim*" (as I left Egypt) with "*be-tzayti miYrushalayim*" (as I left Jerusalem).

The Kinot conclude with the evocative melody of "*Eli Tziyon*," so captivating that it is often used to chant various prayers on Shabbat Chazon, the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av, especially in Ashkenaz synagogues.

Additionally, the melancholy melody of Eicha, the Book of Lamentations, chanted on Tisha B'Av night, conveys the sadness of that Book. Some even have the custom, as did my father, z'l, to recite the third chapter of Eicha with a completely different melody. [See: www.torahmusings.com/2014/12/changing-tune-third-chapter-eicha/]

The Jewish community is blessed with many different "*aydot*" (groups/congregations) that span the globe and centuries of religious expression. My father thought it was important to

expose his family and congregation to these different "*nuschaot*" (liturgical variations) via music and prayer experiences. Though his was a typical Ashkenaz congregation, on Tisha B'Av, when driving is permissible, my father often took congregants to pray in Philadelphia's historic colonial Congregation Mikveh Israel with its Spanish-Portuguese traditions. The chanting of every kinah with a specific, dirgeful tune, along with chapters of Eicha and Iyov recited with the Sephardic cantillation, made Tisha B'Av there a very moving and meaningful unique experience.

For those in New York City, the same uplifting service can be experienced in America's first congregation, Congregation Shearith Israel, The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue.

In fact, Cong. Shearith Israel has many of these melodies online for all to partake of: <https://www.shearithisrael.org/content/tisha-bab-liturgy>. [As we get closer to Tisha B'Av, a link for a live stream of Tisha B'Av services at Cong. Shearith Israel should be available at www.shearithisrael.org, and on the web page of the American Sephardi Federation: americansephardi.org.

I am privileged to dedicate this issue of *Torah To Go* in memory of my dear parents, z'l: Rabbi Meyer Kramer, whose yahrzeit is on 7 Tammuz, and Mrs. Rose Schnabel Kramer, whose yahrzeit is on Tzom Gedalyah, 3 Tishrei.

My father was committed to having a full-time chazan in his shul, (for many years, Chazan Rav Irwin Witty, z'l), because he believed and knew that the beauty and inspiration of a service was enhanced by proper nusach and uplifting and appropriate nigunim.

Growing up in our home in the second half of the 20th Century, the most appreciated form of education and entertainment and edifying spirituality was listening to the many wonderful cantorial, chassidic and general Jewish music on 33 1/3 RPM LP records. While music today is more ubiquitously shared, one thing that hasn't changed is what Chazal teach us—that the Heavenly Gates of Music are never closed.

May we all yet be privileged to listen this Tisha B'Av to what will be the most moving musical celebrations—the singing and instrumental playing by the Levi'im in the rebuilt Bet Hamikdash. May we hear the ultimate sounds of music that will emanate from the Shofar of Mashiach, speedily in our day. Amen.

Framing the Destruction



THE THREE COMMON WORDS FOR TISHA B'AV

What are the words that the Megillah of Eicha asks us to pay attention to? What are the most important words that actually “scream out” to us from the Megillah of Eicha?

My thanks to Professor Koby Kramer, who helped me find, from a statistical perspective, the top three families of words in our canonical text of destruction:

Family: Destruction of the National Home and the Private Home

The word “bat” — daughter — appears in the megillah more than 20 times, most often as *bat Zion*, *bat Yerushalayim* or *bat ami* (the daughter of My nation).

The message is clear: Knesset Yisrael is the daughter of G-d, and the father-daughter relationship is a metaphor that describes the relationship between G-d and His nation. This word *bat* is the most powerful way to describe our relationship: the parent-child contract is permanent. It is impossible to break up, impossible to divorce, impossible to quit. There is no *get* or contract to end the relationship. It lasts forever.

Here are just a few examples of this term from Megillat Eicha:

וַיֵּצֵא מִבֶּת צִיּוֹן כָּל הַדְרָה

Gone from the daughter of Zion are all that were her glory (1:6)

אֵיכָה יָעִיב בָּאֵפוֹ ה' אֶת בֵּת צִיּוֹן

Alas! The Lord in His wrath Has shamed the daughter of Zion. (2:1)

מִבְּצָרֵי בֵּת יְהוּדָה הִגִּיעַ לְאַרְץ
He has razed in His anger the daughter of Judah's strongholds. (2:2)

בְּאֵהָלָהּ בֵּת צִיּוֹן שָׂפָד כְּאֵשׁ הִמָּתוֹ
He poured out His wrath like fire In the tent of the daughter of Zion. (2:4).

וַיִּרְבַּ בְּבֵת יְהוּדָה תְּאֲנִיָּה וְאֲנִיָּה
He has increased within the daughter of Judah mourning and moaning. (2:5)

וַיִּגְדַּל עֲוֹן בֵּת עַמִּי מִחַטָּאת סֹדֵם הַהַפּוּכָה
The guilt of the daughter of My people exceeded the iniquity of Sodom, which was overthrown. (4:6)

תָּם עֲוֹנָךְ בֵּת צִיּוֹן לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִגְלוֹתְךָ
Your iniquity, daughter of Zion, is expiated. (4:22)

We don't need other proof-texts. The megillah reminds us that we, the

Jewish people, Kneset Yisrael, are the daughter of G-d. Specifically in the midst of horror, sadness, destruction, fear and grief — despite it all, we are the “daughter.”

There are other words that attest to the family connection: *bachur* (a young person), *yonek* (a baby), *olel* (little child), *na'ar* (youngster), *zaken* (elder), *almanah* (widow), *isha* (woman).

The destruction of the family is connected to the national destruction. The national destruction began in the family, with small daily events that eventually became a national tragedy. We can see from here how the breakdown of the small family unit leads to the breakdown of the nation. Throughout the summer, one of our goals should be to strengthen our families. This may not be easy, given the difficulties of the last few months. But it is critical.

There is another relevant source. When Devorah presents her “business card” in *Shirat Devorah*, how does she present herself? She could have said that she is a general, a prophet, that she judges under the date tree, that people wait in line to hear her military advice. But her business card says something else:

עד שקמתִי דְבוֹרָה שְׁקַמְתִּי אִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.
Until I Devorah arose, I arose as a mother in Israel.

Shoftim 5:7

It is a mission, it is an assignment, it is sacred, it is precious, it is difficult, it is challenging, but it is the foundation. We all need to work on building and strengthening our private home. Everyone with their unique challenges (singles, marrieds, divorcees) should know that this is the key to building the Temple. These are the words that

the prophet Yirmiyahu repeats most often — both in the context of family that needs to be strengthened, and in the context of our relationship with G-d. Remember that you are children, despite the destruction and exile, remember that this relationship can never be destroyed.

Tears: Not Being Ashamed to Express Sadness

It's a cliché to say that people cry because they are sad, but it is actually not so. We live in an age when emotions sometimes get repressed. We don't properly allow their true expression. Look at how the megillah emphasizes suffering. It is indeed a time to feel suffering, or at least to try:

בְּכוֹ תִבְכֶּה בַּלַּיְלָה וְדַמְעָתָהּ עַל לְחִיָּה
Bitterly she weeps in the night, her
cheek wet with tears. (1:2)

עַל אֵלֶּה אֲנִי בּוֹכִיָּה עֵינַי עֵינַי יִרְדּוּ מַיִם
For these things do I weep, my eyes
flow with tears. (1:16)

כָּלֹו בְדַמְעוֹת עֵינַי
My eyes are spent with tears. (2:11)

הוֹרִידִי כַנַּחַל דְּמָעָה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה אֵל תִּתְּנִי פּוּגַת
לֵךְ אֵל תּוֹדִים בַּת עֵינֶיךָ
Shed tears like a torrent day and night!
Give yourself no respite, your eyes no
rest. (2:18)

קוּמִי רִנֵּי בַּלַּיְלָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֶׁמְרוֹת שְׂפָכֵי כַמַּיִם
לִבְךָ נִבַּח פְּנֵי ה'

Arise, cry out in the night at the
beginning of the watches, pour out
your heart like water in the presence
of the Lord! (2:19)

פְּלָגֵי מַיִם תִּרְדַּע עֵינַי עַל שֶׁבַר בַּת עַמִּי
My eyes shed streams of water over
the ruin of my poor people. (3:48)

עֵינַי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִדְמָה מֵאֵין הַפְּגוֹת
My eyes shall flow without cease,
Without respite. (3:49)

Many commentators tell us around the time of Tisha B'Av to pay attention — don't be ashamed to express grief or sadness, and of course direct it toward the suffering of the Shechinah. We cry together with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This is the time to feel suffering.

Rabbi Erez Moshe Doron is a follower of Breslov. Precisely from Breslov, where it is “a great mitzvah to always be happy,” he explains how important it is to channel the suffering during this time of year. This is a fascinating insight:

All year we ask for a distraction, for comfort. But during this time, we are called to pay attention to sorrow, to the imperfect reality. Not to run away from it, not to repress it, not to do anything that will mitigate the pain, as is done in Western culture. Yes, there is evil in the world, there is bitterness. We are not just seeking comfort, temporary relief, but complete salvation, a perfect reality. This is the time of year when we are called to fight for the world, the condition of the people of Israel, which is supposed to act differently. Our rabbis tell us that when a person meets the Heavenly Court, they ask, “Did you long for salvation?” That is, did you really want a change? We usually ask for the maximum only when we discuss assets and finances. At this time of year, we are asking for the maximum: for love, joy, health, and spirituality.

Rabbi Erez Moshe Doron

Teshuva: Renew our Days as of Old

The root “*shuv*” (return) appears 14 times in Megillat Eicha, and it is interesting to see the change in its meaning throughout the megillah. For example, in chapter 1, we find it

in the context of a move backward, a withdrawal in response to the intensity of an attack:

היא נאָנחָה וַתִּשָּׁב אַחֲזֵר.

She can only sigh and shrink back. (1:8)

פָּרַשׁ רֶשֶׁת לַרְגְּלֵי הַשִּׁיבְנֵי אַחֲזֵר.

He spread a net for my feet, He hurled me backward (1:13)

How sad! In the next chapter, we find the same root; this time, it refers to G-d Himself, to the retraction of G-d's hand. G-d pulls back His hand and allows the destroyers to destroy:

הָשִׁיב אַחֲזֵר יְמִינוֹ מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב וַיִּבְעַר בְּיַעֲקֹב

בָּאֵשׁ לְהַבֶּה אֶכְלָה סָבִיב.

He has withdrawn His right hand
In the presence of the foe; He has
ravaged Jacob like flaming fire,
Consuming on all sides. (2:3)

In chapter 3, we find this root with a

more optimistic tone, in the context of a return to G-d:

זֹאת אֲשִׁיב אֶל-לִבִּי, עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל.

But this do I call to mind, therefore I have hope. (3:21)

נַחֲפָשָׂה דַרְכֵינוּ וְנַחֲקֵרָה, וְנִשׁוּבָה עַד ה'

Let us search and examine our ways,
And turn back to the Lord. (3:40)

In the fifth chapter, we find it in the famous verse at the end of the megillah:

הַשִּׁיבֵנו ה' אֱלֹהֵי וְנִשׁוּבָה, חֲדָשׁ יְמִינוֹ כְּקֶדֶם.

Return us to You, O Lord, that we may be returned! Renew our days as of old. (5:21)

This verse is particularly significant. We want Him to return us, and we will return to Him. It's a shared, bilateral process. The world needs teshuva, especially this year.

We come to Tisha B'Av as different

people after one of our most difficult years, and we ask for help with teshuva in a deep and meaningful way. It seems to me that many of us can relate better to the words of the megillah after our coronavirus experience.

In conclusion, we should merit feeling like a “bat Zion” or a “bat Yehuda,” feeling like we are children of G-d and strengthening our private homes, which will lead to the building of our national home. We should merit to cry when needed and not be ashamed to express true sorrow, and we should direct our tears heavenward. And may we merit to perform teshuva and fulfill the verse at the end of megillah that also marks the end of our exile:

הַשִּׁיבֵנו ה' אֱלֹהֵי וְנִשׁוּבָה, חֲדָשׁ יְמִינוֹ כְּקֶדֶם.

Return us to You, O Lord, that we may be returned! Renew our days as of old. (5:21)





THE SUN SETS IN THE AFTERNOON: YOSHIAHU AND THE LAST CHANCE TO AVERT THE CHURBAN

When we ask, “Why was the First Beit HaMikdash destroyed?” what precisely do we want to know? A historian or someone investigating leadership principles or political science may want to know what challenges the nation faced internally and externally, and what mistakes were made that caused the national disaster that resulted not only in the destruction of the nation’s spiritual center but also the successive exiles of its elite and then its population as a whole. A theologian might be more interested in understanding not political mistakes but the moral shortcomings and religious violations

that led God to remove His protective presence.

The question, in any event, has a long pedigree. Even before the churban, Jeremiah [Yirmiyahu] is told of the consequences for the nation should it continue to fail to fulfil the mandates of the Torah. The prophet imagines himself in a post-churban world: “Who is the wise man that he may understand this? And who is he to whom the Lord has spoken that he may declare it? Wherefore is the land perished and laid waste like a wilderness so that none passeth through?” (9:11, JPS 1917 tr. with minor modifications). God Himself

provides the answer to this still hypothetical question: “Because they have forsaken My law which I have set before them, and have not hearkened to My voice, neither walked therein. Rather have they walked after the stubbornness of their own hearts and after the Ba’alim as their fathers had instructed them.” (9:12–13).¹

It is not only in the prophecies of Yirmiyahu and his fellow prophets that we find such warnings. Even the historical works such as the Book of Kings are replete with warnings about the errors in the ways of the people of Israel and of their leaders.² While the major theme of the rebuke involves

idolatry and abandonment of God, there are also accusations of murder, perversions of justice, and oppression of the poor. The Gemara echoes these themes and, among a series of other explanations, lists the following: denigrating *talmiday chachamim*,³ not providing proper rebuke,⁴ not allowing for “*lifnim meshurat hadin*” in judgments,⁵ transgressing the three “*yehareg ve’al yavor*” sins — idolatry, adultery and murder.⁶ The common theme is a lack of respect for God and for the laws He commanded them, and for violating “*vehalkhta bedreachav*,” following in the path of God.⁷

As King Solomon (Shlomo) begins to build the Beit Hamikdash, God offers encouragement but also a caveat:

הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה בִּנְיָה, אִם-תִּלְךָ בְּחֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תַּעֲשֶׂה, וְשִׁמְרַת אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי, לִלְכֹת בָּהֶם — וְהִקְמֹתִי אֶת-דְּבָרֵי אֲתָדָה, אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי אֶל-דָּוִד אָבִיךָ. וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל; וְלֹא אֶעְזֹב, אֶת-עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

With regard to this House you are building — if you follow My laws and observe My rules and faithfully keep My commandments, I will fulfill for you the promise that I gave to your father David: I will abide among the children of Israel, and I will never forsake My people Israel.
Melakhim I 6:12-13

God agrees to dwell in the midst of Bnai Yisrael, in this house built by Shlomo, but only so long as Bnai Yisrael commit to following His laws.⁸ Shlomo echoed this commitment when he dedicated the edifice at the end of its construction:⁹

וַעֲתָה ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, שָׁמַר לְעַבְדְּךָ דָּוִד אָבִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לִּי לֵאמֹר, לֹא-יִכָּרֵת לְךָ אִישׁ מִלְּפָנַי, יֹשֵׁב עַל-בֵּסֵסֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: רַק אִם-יִשְׁמְרוּ בְּנֵיךָ אֶת-דִּרְכֹּכִים, לִלְכֹת לִפְנָי, כַּאֲשֶׁר הִלְכָתָּ, לִפְנָי.

And now, O LORD God of Israel, keep the further promise that You made to

Your servant, my father David: “Your line on the throne of Israel shall never end, if only your descendants will look to their way and walk before Me as you have walked before Me.”

Melakhim I 8:25

Following its dedication, the Temple drew crowds — from Bnai Yisrael and from other nations. The mikdash represented wisdom.¹⁰ It represented justice.¹¹ It represented the love God has for the nation of Israel in giving them a king who does “*misphat u’tzedakkah*,” justice and righteousness.¹² For a brief, shining moment the tribes of Israel had united, built a house for God, and become a regional power with international alliances.

But even toward the end of Shlomo’s reign we see signs of discontent among the people and seeds of both revolution and idolatry spreading around the country. Yerav’am ben Nevat, who would become the first king of the seceding northern tribes, leads a protest in response to a royal building project that closed a convenient path pilgrims had used to access the Temple Mount.¹³ And Shlomo, influenced by his foreign wives, is said to have built altars to various foreign gods.¹⁴ The protests ultimately led to the splitting of the United Monarchy into two kingdoms.

Yerav’am introduced images into religious practice, images meant to represent God and offer an alternative to visiting the Beit HaMikdash in Jerusalem. He wanted to offer a religious alternative to the Mikdash in order to discourage pilgrims from their thrice-annual trek from his Northern Kingdom to Jerusalem. This action is described by the narrator of Kings as “*chatat*,” a sin.¹⁵ The first to worship foreign gods was Achav,

son of Omri. Achav married Izevel, daughter of the king of Tzidon, and built temples and altars to Baal. Peace treaties between the Northern and Southern Kingdom¹⁶ and eventual intermarriage¹⁷ may have helped transfer the idolatry of the Northern Kingdom into Judah. In addition, justice was perverted. We are told over and over in the Book of Kings — with respect to virtually all the kings of Israel and not a few of the kings of Judah — that so and so had done evil in the eyes of God.

Of these, the most notorious was Menashe, son of the quite excellent King Chezekiah. During his long reign, Menashe reversed the actions of his father, reverting to worship of Ashera and Ba’al. Various abominations were performed in the courtyards of the Temple itself (2 Kings 21:2–8.). As a result of the actions of Menashe, God tells his prophets that Jerusalem will suffer the fate of Shomron; it will be captured by its enemies and destroyed (21:10–15). This, then, is the reason given in Sefer Melakhim to explain why God decided that the Temple was going to be destroyed. Judah was destroyed, its people exiled, and the Temple destroyed, for much the same reason as the Northern Kingdom had been decimated by the Assyrians in 722/721 B.C.E. There is no mystery about why God condemned the Ten Tribes: a detailed explanation focused on idolatry and abandonment of the Torah is set out at 2 Kings 17:7–23. Verse 13 there alludes to Judah as deserving the same fate, and verses 10–15 of chapter 21 affirm that destruction is indeed coming to Jerusalem.

The heavenly decision, then, was apparently made during Menashe’s life, or perhaps at its end. How then

are we to understand the verses at 23:26–27 that appear at the end of the narrative about Menashe’s grandson Josiah (Yoshiahu)? Yoshiahu has been a king whose actions pleased God. And yet at the end of the day his efforts to restore the Torah seem to have fallen just short: “However, the LORD did not turn away from His awesome wrath which had blazed up against Judah because of all the things Menasseh did to vex Him. The LORD said: I will also banish Judah from My presence as I banished Israel; and I will reject the city of Jerusalem which I chose and the House where I said My name would abide” (JPS 1985 translation). These verses seem to suggest that despite the decree set at Menashe’s death dooming Jerusalem and the Temple, there was a chance to overcome it. With Yoshiahu’s death, that chance is blocked, and the destruction follows inexorably.¹⁸

Who was Yoshiahu then, whose tragic end dooms Jerusalem and the Temple? His father (Menashe’s son) Amon was killed in a palace coup (21:20–23) for reasons we are not told. The pesukim merely tell us that he followed in the ways of his father Menashe. How remarkable then that Amon’s son becomes one of the great and righteous kings. Yoshiahu was thrust onto the throne when he was only 8 years old. From the beginning, he is known to do that which is right in the eyes of God. Yoshiahu begins a series of reforms, scaffolding each new reform on the previous one, and begins to literally clean up the land from the impurities of idolatry and reinstate “*tzedek* and *mishpat*” into the fabric of the realm. In the 8th year of his reign [when he is 16], Yoshiahu begins to seek out “the God of David his father,” and in the 12th year of his reign he starts get rid of the idolatry,¹⁹

not only in the Southern Kingdom, but in the Northern Kingdom as well.²⁰ During the 18th year of his reign, he began to do much-needed repairs to the Beit HaMikdash.²¹ The last time repairs were done to the Mikdash was during the reign of his great-grandfather, Chezekiah.

During the renovations,²² a scroll²³ is found in the deep recesses of the Temple, possibly hidden away during the reign of Menashe (2 Kings 20:8–23:3). Yoshiahu convenes the people and reads to them from the newly found scroll, reestablishing their commitment to God and His covenant.²⁴ Yoshiahu continues to remove all traces of idolatry from the land and, with Bnai Yisrael, celebrates Pesach in a way that had not been celebrated since the times of Shmuel.^{25 26}

There is much that Yoshiahu accomplishes during his 31 years on the throne. As Yehudah Kil²⁷ outlines, Yoshiahu expanded the kingdom in many different arenas. He worked on the religious level of the nation — eradicating the idolatry, renewing the *brit*, setting an example of how to live a just and righteous life. He worked on the infrastructure of the Mikdash — undertaking much-needed repairs, making it like new. He worked on the international level — taking advantage of the shifting powers of the superpowers of the time to annex portions of the Northern Kingdom and expand the borders of the Southern Kingdom. On a judicial level, he reinstates *tzedakah* and *mishpat*. In reflecting on all that Yoshiahu accomplished, we are left with several unanswered questions: Why did he not succeed in averting the evil decree and why did he die such an ignominious death?

As scholars have noted, the recounting of his death at the hands of (or at the command of) Pharaoh Necho in Sefer Melakhim is remarkably free of details (23:29–30). The version found in Chronicles is the one that we are familiar with (as in the Kinot for Tish’a B’Av): Yoshiahu set out to confront the Egyptian army and was killed by a hail of arrows from the Egyptian archers. Grievously wounded, he asks his men to take him back to Jerusalem where he breathes his last and is buried.

The route of the Egyptian army up the coastal road leading to Megiddo was the traditional route by which Egyptian kings and traders journeyed, or fought their way, to the Assyrian or Babylonian heartlands. Historians have suggested reasons for the Egyptian move: Necho and his advisors may have been trying, fruitlessly it turned out, to prop up their long-time rival the Assyrian Empire against the ascendant and newly dangerous Babylonians.²⁸ Why, precisely, Yoshiahu opted to challenge the Egyptians (as set out in Chronicles) is hard to know. The Pharaoh makes clear that he has no issue with Judah: “What is there between us?” he tells Yoshiahu. “Stop provoking me.” But Yoshiahu refuses to stand aside and the archers took aim.²⁹

We are left to guess about Yoshiahu’s intentions. Was even Judah subservient to Egypt and itching to throw off the yoke? Was the king suspicious of Egyptian and Assyrian motives and intent on cooperating with the Babylonians? The Tanakh simply does not tell us. Similarly, we are left to guess as to why Yoshiahu thought he would succeed against the powerful army of Egypt. The

Gemara, in *Taanit* 22a, suggests that Yoshiahu misread a verse in Vayikra and as a result refused to pay heed to Yirmiyahu [and in fact did not consult with Yirmiyahu before going to Meggido]. The pasuk³⁰ describes an ideal moment in which Bnai Yisrael are following the laws of the Torah. “This will be a time of peace when no (foreign) sword shall pass through the land.” What sort of sword is there in a time of peace? thought Yoshiahu. He assumed that this must refer to even the peaceful sword of an enemy who is merely trying to pass through the land. Yoshiahu further assumed that Bnai Yisrael were keeping the laws of God and were worthy of the protection promised by the Torah. Yoshiahu did not realize how wrong he was. The midrash in *Eikha Rabbah* (in a passage familiar to many of us from the Kinot) describes how many of the people of his generation were secretly mocking the reforms of Yoshiahu and continuing with their idolatrous ways, almost in plain sight. Yoshiahu would send men into the houses to search for idolatry, and his emissaries would enter through the open door, look to the right, look to the left, and give an “all clear.” As the emissaries were leaving, they were asked to close the door behind them, and by so doing would reconnect the idols. For the idols had been fashioned to the back of the door so that when the doors were open, nothing was seen. It was only upon closing the doors that the idols were intact.³¹ Yoshiahu’s miscalculation, as described in the Midrash, foreshadows the mistakes of his successors who wrongly assume that God will protect His Temple against all enemies.

Yoshiahu’s death is also a catalyst for the calamitous events to come. While it will be 22 years until the churban,



there is a rapid turnover in kings, and the kings quickly become vassals of first Egypt and then Babylon.³²

It seems, in short, that even after God’s decree of destruction at the time of Menashe, there was a window of opportunity for Bnai Yisrael to repent from their evil ways before the decree was sealed. Perhaps, during this window, a change could have been effected. Certainly, if there was anyone who could have implemented or inspired the change it would have been Yoshiahu. But, as Rav Yuval Cherlow notes,³³ in some ways it was already too late. The people were not successful in their teshuva, and therefore, the decree could not be averted.

Yoshiahu was the sun who set in the afternoon,³⁴ the precious gem spilled on the street.³⁵ Like Avraham, he managed to “discover” God in a time where the society around him was mired in idolatry. Like Moshe, he taught Bnai Yisrael the laws of God, and how to live a life based on *avodat HaShem*.³⁶ His death was a national tragedy, leaving the righteous of Bnai Yisrael in despair, and inevitably leading to that terrible day on which the Temple was burned.³⁷

Endnotes

1. The Talmud discusses these pesukim in various places including *B.M.* 85a-b, and *Nedarim* 81a, where the sin is explained to be not violation of the Law, per se, but of not making the mandated *berakha* prior to learning Torah. Various commentators over the centuries have suggested that this interpretation is based at least in part on the assumption that if there truly was widespread violation of the Torah, the question would hardly have needed to be asked and, in any event, would not have stumped the wise men, thus requiring God Himself to respond. None of this is necessary, though, if the question was rhetorical (contrary to the translation cited above in the text), and implied, to the contrary, that any wise man would be able to understand the reason for the nation’s fate. See Menachem Bula’s explanation in the *Da’at Mikra* series. The interpretive problem is also avoided according to the explanation in Hartoum/Cassuto: Looking into the future, the prophet rebukes the elites and supposed wise men who ignored the word of God for so long in advance of the churban. The narrative surrounding Yirmiyahu’s prophecies also strongly suggests that many of the generation of the churban felt that the people of Israel had divine protection and that the Temple could not be destroyed; the “wise” among them would indeed have been shocked when the disaster struck.

2. At least to some extent, there is a clear difference between the Bible’s purely prophetic works and the historical works in establishing a causal background for the national disaster. The notion of dual causality (*sibatiut kefula*) is well established in biblical studies — the idea is that the text credits both

natural and supernatural causes to explain various events. A clear example is presented by Elhanan Samet with respect to the creation of the divided monarchy: 1 Kings 11 explains the cause as the sins of Shlomo ha-Melekh (King Solomon), while chapter 12 ascribes it to the failures of the next king Rechav'am and his advisors to properly navigate the just claims of the people. Samet's excellent development of the theme may be found online at the Virtual Beit Midrash, Shiur 11 of a series on the Book of Kings, etzion.org.il. The phenomenon must have been recognized at least on some level in earlier generations but was highlighted in modern times by Professor Yechezkel Kaufman, primarily in his lectures. The term appears in his *Commentary to the Book of Joshua* (Jerusalem 1963), p. 128. See, too, Jonathan Grossman, "The Design of the 'Dual Causality' Principle in the Narrative of Absalom's Rebellion," *Biblica*, Vol. 88 No. 4 (2007), pp. 558–566. Here, too, it is perfectly possible to read the downfall of Judah as the natural result of power politics in the Ancient Near East. As noted in the text above, though, even the biblical historical texts, while providing evidence of natural causation, highlight God's anger as the ultimate cause of the downfall of Judah.

3. TB *Shabbat* 119b.

4. Ibid.

5. TB *Bava Metziah* 30b.

6. *Yoma* 9b.

7. *Devarim* 28:9.

8. 1Kings 6:11–13.

9. 1Kings 8:25.

10. 1Kings 10:3–5. See explanations of Rashi, Radak, Metzudat David and Ralbag ad loc.

11. See *Tehillim* 122:6.

12. 1Kings 10:9.

13. 1Kings 11:27.

14. 1Kings 11:1–10, or, as many commentators, including Rashi, *Metzudat David* and Malbim, note, Shlomo allowed his

foreign wives to build the altars, and the pasuk therefore "credits" him with doing the actual building.

15. 1Kings 12: 29.

16. 1Kings 22.

17. 2Kings 8:18. Yoram the son of Yehoshafat marries the daughter of Achav.

18. The pesukim in 2Divray HaYamim, 34:23-38, suggest that the prophetess Huldah specifically told Yimiyahu that he was doomed to fail. But it is important to note that not all prophecies are actualized. Often a bad prophecy will inspire prayer and teshuva, as happened with Chezikiah in 2Kings 20: 1-3.

19. 2Divray HaYamim 34:3.

20. 2Kings 23, 19. From this it appears that he expanded the boundaries of his kingdom to reclaim areas that had been captured by the Assyrians.

21. 2Divray HaYamin, 34:14.

22. 2Divray HaYamim 34:15.

23. The story of the finding of the scroll, one of the most famous in Tanakh, is the subject of an enormous literature. For a traditional approach, see Yehudah Kil's interpretation of the parallel version in Chronicles (Divray HaYamim) which may be found at <http://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/tanach/iyunim/ktuvim/divrey-hayamin/maamarim/kil-metsiat.htm>. See also Kil's summary of the reign of Yoshiahu in the *Daat Mikra to Sefer Melakhim Bet*, pp. 806–811.

24. 2Divray HaYamim 34:29–33.

25. 2 Divray HaYamim 35:19–25.

26. 2Divray HaYamim 35:18.

27. See note 22.

28. See, for instance, A. Malamat, "Josiah's Bid for Armageddon," *Journal of the Ancient Near East Society* 5 (1), 2159, 1973; T. Talshir, "The Three Deaths of Josiah and the Strata of Biblical Historiography," *Vetus Testamentum* 46 (2), 213–236, 1996; B. Schipper, "Egypt and the Kingdom of Judah under Josiah

and Jehoiakim," *Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University*, 37:2, 200–226, 1996.

29. 2Divray HaYamim 35:23.

30. *Vayikra* 26:3.

31. *Eikha Rabba* 1:18.

32. Yoshiahu's son Yehoachaz rules for three months until he is imprisoned by Pharaoh Necho. Pharaoh Necho appoints and renames the next king [Elyakim is an older brother of Yehoachaz, and his name is changed to Yehoyakim]. Yehoyakim will rule for three years and then becomes a vassal to Babylon when Nevuchadnetzar invades Jerusalem. Yehoyachin, son of Yehoyakim, succeeds his father and rules for three months when Nevuchadnetzar surrounds Jerusalem and lays siege. The siege will last for three years until the year 586 BCE. Nevuchadnetzar breaks through the ramparts of Jerusalem, exiles Yehoyachin to Babylon, and loots the king's palace and the Mikdash. Matanyah, son of Yoshiyahu, is appointed as "king" in Jerusalem and his name is changed by Nevuchadnetzar to Tzidkiyahu.

33. הרב יובל שלר, "רוח אפיונו משיח ה' נלכד בשחיתותם", מגדים תשרי תשמח, 66-36.

34. *Moed Katan* 25b, based on the pasuk in Amos 8:9 והיה ביום ההוא... הבאתי שמש בצהריים and it will be on that day... I will make the sun set in the afternoon.

35. *Eikha* 4:1 איכה ... תשתפחנה אבני קדש בראש כל חוצות, the sacred gems are spilled at every street corner.

36. From the piyyut ירמיהו את יאשיהו by Rav Elazar HaKalir, 7th-century paytan from Israel who notes that there was no king like Yoshiahu, no one like him since the time of Moshe. גם בְּכֹל מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר קָמוּ לְגֹדֵה לֹא קָם כְּמוֹהוּ מִיָּמֹת אַבְיָגְדוֹר.

37. A reason for his name is suggested by Rav Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer in *מדרש חסרות* in *בתי מדרשות ורטהימר רלד*.



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NEGLECT OF TORAH AS A CAUSE OF CHURBAN

Yirmiyahu HaNavi, in an impassioned line that we read Tisha B'av morning, asks (Yirmiyahu 9:11): *al ma avda ha'aretz* — what is the cause of the churban? Apparently, nobody was able to answer this question according to the Gemara, *Nedarim* 81a. Even angels were left baffled by the query, so Hashem Himself had to give the answer. As the Navi reports (and as repeated by mashgichim and roshei yeshiva from time immemorial), Hashem answered *al azvam es Torasi* — the churban resulted from neglecting Torah.

This statement is not only striking, it is also deeply puzzling. We know the reason for the churban. The Gemara in *Yoma* 9b, teaches that the churban resulted from violating *giluy arayos*, *avoda zara* and *shefichus damim*, sexual immorality, idolatry and murder, the three cardinal sins for which one must surrender his or her life. How can the Navi tell us that the churban resulted

from neglect of Torah when we know that violating these most severe sins caused the churban?

Many answers are suggested. Some note a distinction between the verse in Yirmiyahu which speaks of destruction of Eretz Yisrael *al ma avda ha'aretz*, and the words of the Gemara in *Yoma*, which speaks of churban HaBayis. Yirmiyahu HaNavi teaches that neglect of Torah led to the destruction of Eretz Yisrael and the exile of Jews. The Beis HaMikdash, however, was destroyed because of the violation of the three cardinal sins. Perhaps we can explain this distinction as follows. The Beis HaMikdash is intended to atone for our sins. However, when we commit sins of tremendous magnitude, such as the three cardinal sins, the Beis HaMikdash is unable to fulfill its role and can no longer exist. In contrast to the Beis HaMikdash, however, Eretz Yisrael is not intended to atone for sins of the Jews. Our rights

to Eretz Yisrael are predicated on our acceptance of Torah. Failure to maintain that responsibility, failure to study Torah, causes us to relinquish our rights to Eretz Yisrael.

Others resolve the contradiction between the pasuk and the Gemara in *Yoma* differently. They note that despite violating the gravest of sins, the churban would not have occurred had we studied Torah. In the words of the Midrash at the introduction to *Eicha Rabba*:

הלואי אתי עזבו ותורתני שמרו שמתוך שהיו מתעסקים בה המאור שבה היה מחזירן למוטב.

If only they would have abandoned Me but observed the Torah, through their involvement in [the study of] Torah, its light would have guided them back to becoming good people.

Violating the gravest of sins did not ensure churban. Had the Jewish people continued to study Torah, the light of Torah would have returned Klal Yisrael to a place of favor with Hashem.

The Failure to Recite Birchas HaTorah

Both these approaches follow the simple reading of the pasuk. It was the neglect of Torah, the utter failure to study and engage in its words, which was the cause of churban. However, the Gemara in *Nedarim* interprets the pasuk otherwise.

According to the Gemara, churban results not from neglect of Torah study but from neglecting to recite birchas HaTorah, the bracha that is recited before study of Torah. The Jewish people in fact studied Torah. However, they did so improperly. They failed to recite a bracha when they studied Torah. That is what caused the churban.

Failure to recite a bracha seems to be quite a trivial offense. So what? Why would failure to recite a bracha cause the churban? The RAN in *Nedarim* cites Rabbenu Yona who explains that the Jewish people did not recite birchas HaTorah because they did not consider Torah something significant enough to require a bracha. They did not study Torah for the proper reason, *lishma*, and lacked appropriate reverence for Torah; therefore, they failed to recite a bracha on Torah study. It was this lack of respect for Torah, rather than failure to study Torah altogether, which according to the Gemara in *Nedarim* caused the churban.

The Conceptual Nature of Birchas HaTorah

Rabbenu Yona's comment that the Jewish people did not view Torah as significant enough to warrant a bracha may reflect on the conceptual nature of birchas HaTorah. Halacha posits three distinct categories of

brachos. There are brachos recited before the performance of all mitzvos, for example, the bracha that comes before one shakes a lulav or eats matza. There are brachos recited as *shevach vehodaah*, praising Hashem for a wonderful gift such as great mountains or other marvels of creation. Finally, there are *birchas hanehenin*, the brachos recited before deriving pleasure, most often before eating.

There is considerable literature that discusses how to categorize birchas HaTorah. Ramban (*Hashmatos to mitzvas aseh* 15) states that birchas HaTorah are brachos of *shevach vehodaah*. The GRA (*OH* 47:18) argues that they are *birchos hamitzva*. The third, often neglected possibility, is advanced by the *Levush* (47:1). Birchas HaTorah is recited before learning, to acknowledge the pleasure derived from the study of Torah.

Rabbenu Yona's comment can be interpreted in light of these three possibilities. If birchas HaTorah is a birchas hamitzva, the Jewish people were negligent in not performing the mitzva properly. The actual mitzva of Torah study must involve exertion and toil. Rashi at the beginning of Bechukosai stresses that following the dictates of the Torah, which is necessary to avoid the dreadful curses of the *tochacha*, means exerting oneself in Torah study. Studying without labor and exertion falls short of the genuine mitzva. This approach finds support in the text of birchas HaTorah recited in many *nuschaos* and based on some *girsaos* of the Gemara, *la'asok b'divrei Torah*: the mitzva is the toil and labor involved in study. *TAZ* (*OH* 47:1) maintains that since the Jewish people studied Torah without exertion, and therefore did not properly perform the mitzva, they did not recite a bracha.

Those who maintain that birchas HaTorah is a bracha of *shevach vehodaah*, a bracha praising Hashem for a marvelous gift, would argue that the Jews deserved exile because they failed to appreciate the beauty and wonder of Torah. The splendor of Torah shines forth most brilliantly in the Beis HaMikdash, which served as both the location of the *Torah shebichsav* (written Torah) in the form of the Luchos, and the *Torah she'beal peh* (oral Torah) in the form of the Sanhedrin, who sat in the *Lishkas HaGazis*, which was partially in the *Kodesh* (a sanctified part of the Beis HaMikdash). When Jews did not recognize the beauty and splendor of Torah, the Beis HaMikdash, which housed this splendor, had to be taken from them.

Finally, the *Levush* understands the Gemara to mean that the Jewish people did not recite birchas HaTorah because they did not properly enjoy their study. *Levush* explains that their failure to enjoy Torah study rendered their learning not *lishma*. Interestingly, this comment dovetails with the famous introduction of the *Eglei Tal*. The *Eglei Tal* comes to disabuse a rampant misconception. Many believe that one who enjoys his learning is actually not learning *lishma*. They assume that a pure motive in Torah study can come about when one studies only because he is commanded to do so. Any other motive to study Torah makes that study less pure and thus not *lishma*. *Eglei Tal* argues that precisely the opposite is true. One who enjoys his Torah study and derives pleasure from that study is actually of purer motive and greater *lishma* than the individual who studies only out of a sense of commandment.

Lapses in Torah Study

Why would the Gemara diverge from the simple meaning of the pasuk? The pasuk indicates that it was complete neglect of Torah study that caused the churban. Why would the Gemara pin the churban on the seemingly minor infraction of failure to recite a bracha, rather than the larger issue of not studying Torah at all?

Beis HaLevi, *Parashas Yisro*, in an interpretation that he himself considers innovative, reconciles the Gemara in *Nedarim* with the simple reading of the pasuk. He does this based on his interpretation of a Gemara in *Brachos*.

The Gemara in *Brachos* (35a) discusses the appropriate way for one to lead his life. Should an individual only study Torah or also engage in worldly pursuits to earn a living? Rabbi Yishmael maintains that the preferred approach is *hanheg bahem minhag derech erez* — to both study and work. However, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai maintains that during times when the Jewish people are properly performing Hashem's mandates, there will be no need to work. Parnassa will come on its own; one should spend all his time engaged in Torah study. *Beis HaLevi* understands (as does R. Chaim of Volozhin in *Nefesh HaChaim* Shaar 1 #8) that Rabbi Yishmael is not permitting an individual to refrain from Torah study for even a moment. Rather, Rabbi Yishmael maintains *hanheg bahem minhag derech erez*; one is obligated to study Torah even at the exact moment that he engages in worldly pursuits. According to *Beis HaLevi*, the cause of the churban was that the Jewish people did not engage in Torah study while they were involved in worldly pursuits. Their thoughts while at work were on

mundane matters rather than Torah. That is why they did not recite birchas HaTorah; that is why there was a churban.

The Jewish people did, in fact, study Torah, as the Gemara in *Nedarim* indicates. As is appropriate according to Rabbi Yishmael, they also engaged in worldly pursuits and earned a livelihood. The difficulty came about because they did not engage with Torah when they were working. During their working hours they were exclusively occupied with mundane thoughts of commerce. They did not appropriately think of the ways their professional pursuits impacted on Torah matters. They thought only of earning a living rather than of how the living they earned must be void of all elements of deception or theft. The pasuk that indicates their failure to study Torah altogether actually means that during their working hours, their minds were not also occupied with thoughts of how their commercial activities impacted on halacha.

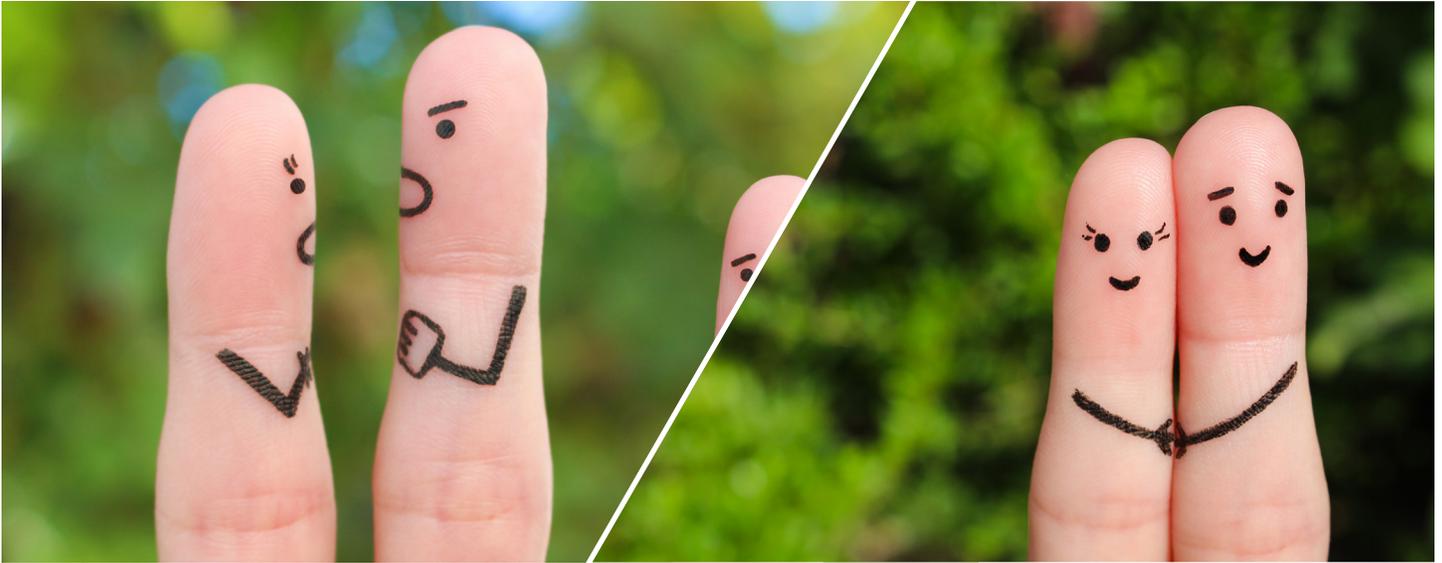
Baalei HaTosafos are bothered about why a person recites the bracha on sukka multiple times a day, yet the birchas HaTorah that is recited in the morning carries them through the entire day. Why does one who sits down to study daf Yomi after a long day in the office not recite a new birchas HaTorah? The Baalei HaTosafos answer that one need not recite a new birchas HaTorah since the individual was always mindful of Torah. Even while at work the individual has Torah ideas constantly reverberating in his mind. Unlike sukka, where one has *heseich hadaas* (a lapse in awareness) when he leaves the sukka, an individual never has *heseich hadaas* from Torah. As such, were an individual to actually lose awareness

of Torah while at work, such a person would need to recite birchat HaTorah again.

According to *Beis HaLevi's* explanation, the cause of the churban was the *heseich hadaas* from Torah at the time that they were at work. This *heseich hadaas*, this momentary lapse of Torah awareness while at work, should have necessitated a new birchas HaTorah. The comment of the Gemara in *Nedarim* that the churban came about because the Jewish people failed to recite birchas HaTorah even though they learned, goes hand in hand with the simple meaning of *al azvam es Torasi*, that the Jewish people neglected Torah study altogether. They studied Torah while in the *beis midrash*. However, while at work, their minds lapsed. This lapse should have necessitated a new bracha. The churban resulted from this lapse.

Conclusion

The lessons of neglecting Torah that emerge from our presentation are quite different from the conventional mussar schmooze about *bitul Torah*. I, for one, find these lessons far more powerful. The need to find pleasure, joy and happiness in learning cannot be underestimated. Joy is infectious. One who recites birchas HaTorah as a *birchas hanehenin* will certainly find success as a teacher of Torah. Additionally, we can argue that one who finds enjoyment in Torah will be able to maintain Torah focus even while involved in pursuing his livelihood. The goal is to recite a *birchas hanehenin* on Torah. To enjoy learning Torah so much that we remain mindful of Torah at all times, even while engaged in earning a livelihood, is a certain way to overcome the churban.



GROWING IN LOVE AS A PATH TO PERSONAL AND NATIONAL REDEMPTION

The Gemara, Yoma 9b, gives us the cause for the destruction of the first and second Beit Hamikdash:

מקדש ראשון מפני מה חרב מפני ג' דברים שהיו בו ע"ז וגלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים ... אבל מקדש שני ... מפני מה חרב מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם ללמדך ששקולה שנאת חנם כנגד שלש עבירות ע"ז גלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים.

The first Holy Temple, why was it destroyed? Because of three different aspects that had become part of its very nature: idol worship, illicit relations and murder ... The second Holy Temple ... why was it destroyed? Because of baseless hatred (sinat chinam). This comes to

teach us that baseless hatred is equivalent to the three cardinal prohibitions of idol worship, illicit relations, and murder.

How are we expected to combat the “baseless hatred” we may be feeling in our hearts toward our fellow Jew? Is it enough to simply not hate, or are we expected to do more?

Rav Kook determines that if hatred destroyed the Temple, then the opposite will rebuild it:

ואם נחרבנו, ונחרב העולם עמנו על ידי שנאת חנם, נשוב להבנות, והעולם עמנו יבנה, על ידי אהבת חנם.

If we were destroyed, and the world with us, due to baseless hatred, then we shall

rebuild ourselves, and the world with us, with baseless love — ahavat chinam.

Orot HaKodesh vol. III, p. 324

The Torah, Vayikra 19:18, commands us to love others in the following way:

לֹא תִקֶם וְלֹא תִטּוֹר אֶת בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאֶהְרַת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה'.

Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge against the members of your people, and you shall love your fellow as you love yourself; I am God.

The Torah does not inform us what the nature of this “love” is. Is it enough to simply feel love for others in our hearts? Should we be going around telling people that we love them

irrespective of our relationship to them? The commentators tell us that real love involves much more than lip service or internal feelings.

Ahavat Yisrael as a Prohibition Against Hurting Others

The Rambam in the *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Deot* 6:3 defines the mitzvah to love others by caring for them as you would yourself:

מצוה על כל אדם לאהוב את כל אחד ואחד מישראל כגופו שנאמר ואהבת לרעך כמוך לפיכך צריך לספר בשבחו ולחוס על ממונו כאשר הוא חס על ממונו עצמו ורוצה בכבוד עצמו והמתכבד בקלון חבירו אין לו חלק לעולם הבא.

It is a mitzvah incumbent upon every person to love each member of the Jewish people as much as he loves himself, as the verse states, "And you shall love your fellow as you love yourself." Therefore, one must speak praise of another person and be cautious with another's property in the same way that he desires to be honored and is cautious with his own property. However, one who glorifies himself through the denigration of his fellow has no share in the World to Come.

The *Sefer HaChinuch*, Mitzvah 243, defines loving your neighbor as yourself as not hurting others:

ואמרו זכרונם לברכה [שבת ל"א ע"א] דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד. ואמרו בספרי, אמר רבי עקיבא זה כלל גדול בתורה, כלומר שהרבה מצוות שבתורה תלויין בכך, שהאהבה חבירו כנפשו לא יגנוב ממונו ולא ינאף את אשתו ולא יונהו בממונו ולא בדברים ולא יסיג גבולו ולא יזיק לו בשום צד. וכן כמה מצוות אחרות תלויות בזה.

The Sages have said, "Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to your friend." In the Sifri, it is stated that Rabbi Akiva said, "This is a fundamental principle

in the Torah," meaning that many commandments are related to this one, in the respect that one who loves his fellow will not steal his belongings, nor be unfaithful with his wife, nor will he defraud or insult him, nor trespass upon his property, nor cause him damage in any way. Thus, the fulfillment of many other commandments is dependent upon the fulfillment of this one.

The *Sefer HaMitzvot HaGadol*, *Mitzvat Asei* 9, gives us a broader understanding of the mitzvah, since he views hurting others as if you are actually harming yourself:

מי שיושב ומחתך בשר והכה ידו בסכין וכי תחזור ידו ותכה ידו להנמק.

Imagine a person sitting and cutting a piece of meat, who accidentally cuts his own hand with the knife. Would it be logical for him to hit the hand that is holding the knife in revenge?

The *Sefer HaChinuch*, Mitzvah 243, goes even further in describing the mitzvah to love each Jew. He tells us to show compassion to a person and his assets. Treat a person the way we would want to be treated ourselves, and to love each member of Israel with a "soul love," i.e. to have compassion for a Jew and his property just as we have compassion for ourselves and our own property:

שכלל הכל הוא שיתנהג האדם עם חבירו כמו שיתנהג עם עצמו, לשמור ממונו ולהרחיק ממנו כל נזק, ואם יספר עליו דברים יספרם לשבח ויחוס על כבודו ולא יתכבד בקלונו, וכמו שאמרו זכרונם לברכה [ירושלמי חגיגה פ"ב ה"א] המתכבד בקלון חבירו אין לו חלק לעולם הבא. והמתנהג עם חבירו דרך אהבה ושלוש ורעות ומבקש תועלתם ושמה בטובם, עליו הכתוב אומר [ישעיהו מ"ט, ג'] ישראל אשר בך אתפאר.

The elements included in this mitzvah follow the general principle that one should treat another person in the way he would treat himself, e.g. protecting

his property, preventing him from being harmed, speaking only well of him, respecting him, and certainly not glorifying oneself at his expense. The Sages have said regarding this last point, "One who glorifies himself at the expense of his fellow has no share in the World to Come." Whereas, one who behaves with others in a loving and peaceful manner fulfills the verse, "Israel, by whom I am glorified."

Rav Kook, when describing the mitzvah to love others, speaks from his heart and his soul. From his description we can see that the love we should feel for others should be deep and very real. It should stem from the desire to connect with the light of Hashem that flickers in every Jew:

שמעו אלי עמי. מתוך נשמתני אני מדבר עמכם, מתוך נשמתני, מתוך קשר החיים שאני קשור בכולכם, ואתם כולכם קשורים בי, מתוך אותה ההרגשה שאני חש אותה עמוק יותר מכל הרגשות החיים שלי, שאתם רק אתם, רק אתם, רק כולכם, כללכם, כל נשמותיכם, כל דורותיכם, רק אתם הנכם תוכן חיי, בכם אני חיי, בכם, בחטיבה הכוללת של כולכם, יש לחיי אותה התוכן, שהוא קרוי חיים, מבלעדיכם אין לי כלום. כל התוכן, כל השאיפות, כל הערך של שיווי החיים, הכל אני מוצא בקרבי רק עמכם ואני זקוק להתקשר עם נשמותיכם כולכם. אני מוכרח לאהבה אתכם אהבה אין קץ. אי אפשר לי להרגיש שום הרגשה אחרת. כל האהבות הקטנות עם הגדולות שבכל תהלוכות חיי הכל אצורות הן באהבתכם באהבת כללותכם, הכלל שכל הפרטים שלכם בו היום וחיים כל אחד מכם כל נשמה בודדת שמכלל כולכם היא ניצוץ גדול וחשוב מאבוקת אור עולמיים, המאירה לי את אור החיים אתם נותנים אתם לי תוכן לחיים לעבודה, לתורה, לתפילה, לשירה לתקוה. דרך הצינור של הוייתכם אני חש את הכל אני אוהב את הכל.

Listen to me, my people! I speak to you from my soul, from within my innermost soul. I call out to you from the living

connection by which I am bound to all of you, and by which all of you are bound to me. I feel this more deeply than any other feeling: that only you — all of you, all of your souls, throughout all of your generations — you alone are the meaning of my life. In you I live. In the aggregation of all of you, my life has that content that is called “life.” Without you, I have nothing. All hopes, all aspirations, all purpose in life, all that I find inside myself — these are only when I am with you. I need to connect with all of your souls. I must love you with a boundless love.

Each one of you, each individual soul from the aggregation of all of you, is a great spark from the torch of infinite light, which enlightens my existence. You give meaning to life and work, to Torah and prayer, to song and hope. It is through the conduit of your being that I sense everything and love everything.

Shemonah Kevatzim, vol. I, sec. 163

According to Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Tanya* 32, by recognizing the incredible G-dliness in man who is made in G-d’s image, love of all man will be the inevitable consequence:

והנה ע"י קיום הדברי' הנ"ל להיות גופו נבזה ונמאס בעיניו רק שמחתו תהיה שמחת הנפש לבדה הרי זו דרך ישרה וקלה לבא לידי קיום מצות ואהבת לרעך כמוך לכל נפש מישראל למגדול ועד קטן. כי מאחר שגופו נמאס ומתועב אצלו והנפש והרוח מי יודע גדולתו ומעלתו בשרשן ומקורן באלקי' חיים. בשגם שכולן מתאימות ואב א' לכולנה ולכן נקראו כל ישראל אחים ממש מצד שורש נפשם בה' אחד רק שהגופים מחולקי'. ולכן העושי' גופם עיקר ונפשם טפלה אי אפשר להיות אהבה ואחווה אמיתית ביניהם אלא התלויה בדבר לבדה. וז"ש הלל הזקן על קיום מצוה זו זהו כל התורה כולה ואידך פירושא הוא כו'. כי יסוד ושורש כל התורה הוא להגביה ולהעלות הנפש על הגוף מעלה מעלה עד עיקרא ושרשא דכל עלמין וגם להמשיך אור א"ס ב"ה בכנסת ישראל כמ"ש לקמן דהיינו במקור נשמות כל

ישראל למהוי אחד באחד דוקא ולא כשיש פירוה.

A person who recognizes the loftiness of the soul, as contrasted to the lowliness of the body, can easily fulfill the mitzvah of loving one’s fellow. All Jews are interconnected and all are children of One Father. Therefore we are called brothers, since each person’s soul has its root within God, and one is only divided from the other in the physical sense. On the other hand, one who gives precedence to the physical will not be able to truly fulfill this mitzvah in an unconditional way, as required. That is why Hillel described this mitzvah as the most fundamental commandment in the Torah, while the rest is commentary. For the foundation of the service of God is to elevate one’s soul to its root and thereby draw down spiritual sustenance for the Jewish people, which is not possible to do if we are divided.

By recognizing the incredible G-dliness in man who is made in G-d’s image, love of all man will be the inevitable consequence.



Giving Creates Love Not the Other Way Round

In his essay on loving kindness, the mussar giant Rav Eliyahu E. Dessler defines love as the result of giving.

כאשר ברא אלקים את האדם, עשהו לנותן ונוטל. כח הנתינה הוא כח עליון ממדות יוצר הכל ברוך הוא, שהוא מרחם ומטיב ונותן, מבלי קבל דבר בתמורה, הן לא יחסר לו כלום ... רק שאנו מביעים לו את תודתנו, אשר זה שורש עבודתנו לו. וככה עשה את האדם ... כי יוכל לרחם ולהטיב וליתן.

When the Almighty created human beings He made them capable of both giving and taking. The faculty of giving is a sublime power. It is one of the attributes of G-d Himself. He is the Giver par excellence. His bounty and His goodness extend to all His creatures. His giving is pure giving for He takes nothing in return. He can take nothing for He lacks nothing. Man has been granted this sublime power of giving enabling him too to be merciful to bestow happiness to give of himself.

Strive For Truth page 119

(Translated by Rav Aryeh Carmell, Feldheim Publishers)

The word for “love” in Hebrew, “*ahava*,” has the root “*hav*,” which means to give. The more a person gives to others the more the giver will love the recipient. Will the recipient feel love toward the giver? Not necessarily. This is because the act of giving in and of itself creates the *ahava*. Taking, says Rav Dessler, may be a necessity for all of us, but it doesn’t create a “love” relationship in and of itself. The following true story from World War II illustrates this point. Rav Dessler tells the story (*Michtav M’Eliyahu*, Volume 1, Page 36) of a case that he personally observed. (From a personal conversation I had with a member of Rav Dessler’s family, this story was

actually biographical, and it involved Rav Dessler himself, his wife and child):

I knew a young couple whose little son was the delight of their lives. War overtook their town and they were forced to flee. It so happened that the young mother was away from home on that day; the father fled with his little boy in one direction while the mother was forced to take the opposite route, and so the family was separated. At last the battlefronts grew quiet, peace returned, and they were reunited — and what a happy family union that was. But a remarkable thing came to light. The love between the father and his son was deeper than that of the mother for the son. The cruel fact was that the potential “giving” of all those years was lost beyond recall. It was the father who had reared the child and had lavished on him the thousand-and-one acts of tender care which normally fall to the mother. The love which springs from all that giving had passed completely to the father.

Loving Others Like Yourself Begins at Home

The idea of loving others as oneself was observed very clearly in the life and actions of Rav Aryeh Levin in his love of every Jew. This story involving his relationship to his wife beautifully illustrates this idea:

Rabbi Aryeh Levin was one of the most beloved rabbis of the previous generation. He lived in Israel and had a wonderful reputation among all Jews, no matter

their background or religious level. On any given week, Rabbi Levin could be seen visiting inmates in the local prison, relating to soldiers defending the land of Israel, or taking care of the needy. He was also married for many years right up to his old age. In her later years his wife started experiencing foot problems. One day the pain became unbearable and Rabbi Levin decided to visit the doctor with her. Upon their arrival the doctor brought them both into his examination room. The doctor looked at Rebbetzin Levin and asked, “How can I help?” Before his wife could say anything, Rabbi Levin answered, “My wife’s foot hurts us.” It wasn’t her foot; it was their foot. If she was experiencing pain, so was he, and that’s how they experienced life together.

The Life of Rabbi Aryeh Levin: A Tzaddik in our time. By Simcha Raz. Page 150 (Feldheim)

Mashiach Will Come When True Love Reigns Supreme

The Chafetz Chaim, (*Shmirat HaLashon, Chelek Sheini*, Ch. 7), tells us that Mashiach will come when we maintain peace in our communities by eradicating both baseless hatred and speaking in derogatory ways about others. Baseless hatred is actualized primarily through lashon hara:

והנה כתבו הספרים בשם הזוהר “ק דבי כנישתא חדא אם היו שומרים מדת השלום כדבעי יכולים לזכות לביאת המשיח א”כ ביאת המשיח תלוי בידוע וידוע דמדת השלום אין אנו יכולים לזכות בו רק אם נהיה זהירים ממתלה מעון שנאת חנם ולשה”ר וכל אחד

שיתחזק לתקן החטא הזה יהיה לו חלק בהבית הבנוי לעתיד דבלתם היה הבית חרב לעולם ח”ו.

It is written in the name of the Holy Zohar that even one congregation that maintains peace properly can merit bringing the Mashiach. Therefore, the coming of the Mashiach is dependent upon us. And it is known that preserving peace can only be accomplished if we are careful in avoiding both baseless hatred and speaking derogatorily of one another. Each individual who endeavors to rectify these shortcomings will have a share in rebuilding the future Temple; without this, the Temple could remain destroyed forever, God forbid.

May we be zoche to build a true and lasting love connection between every Jew, and as a result, merit the final geulah, the coming of Mashiach and the rebuilding of the third and final Beit Hamikdash.



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Hajioff at <https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-lawrence-hajioff>



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RYNHOLD: JPH 5011 Survey of Medieval Jewish Philosophy

Monday / 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

EICHLER: BIB 6212 Genesis: The Creation of the World

PILNIK: JHI 6486

Cultural Responses to the Holocaust

This class will not meet every week.

It will combine live online sessions with asynchronous online content.

Monday / 6:50 – 8:30 p.m.

KOLLER: BIB 5203 Biblical Hebrew

BERGER: JHI 6484 Messianism from Chazal to Chabad

This course counts toward the concentrations in Ancient, Medieval and Modern History

Tuesday / 2:49 – 4:29 p.m.

DAUBER: JPH 6745 Topics in 13th-Century Kabbalah

HURVITZ: TAS 7521 She'iltot of R'Ahai Gaon

Tuesday / 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

GUROCK: JHI 5571 American Jewish History 1654–1881

Tuesday / 6:50 – 8:30 p.m.

COHEN: BIB 6097 Nahmanides' Exegesis and Thought

OLSON: JHI 5321 Jews in Modern Europe, Social & Intellectual History: 1760–1900

HURVITZ: TAS 5872 Midrashic Literature of the Amoraim

Wednesday / 2:49 – 4:29 p.m.

BERGER: JHI 5321 Medieval Jewish History: Christian Europe

Wednesday / 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

LEIMAN: BIB 8250 Book of Proverbs

Wednesday / 6:50 – 8:30 p.m.

FINE: JHI 6461 Modern Historians on Ancient Jewish History

This course counts toward the concentrations in Ancient and Modern History

ZIMMERMAN: JHI 6484 Destruction of European Jewry: 1933–1945

Thursday / 2:49 – 4:29 p.m.

ANGEL: JHI 6239 The Dead Sea Scrolls & Rabbinic Literature

This course also counts for the concentration in Talmud.

DAUBER: JPH 5350 Introduction to Jewish Mysticism

Thursday / 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

RYNHOLD: JPH 6860 The Early Modern Period: Spinoza & Mendelssohn

Thursday / 5:10 – 6:50 p.m.

HIDARY: TAS 6885 Midrash in Context

This course will be taught at the Beren campus, and available Online

Thursday / 6:50 – 8:30 p.m.

PERELIS: JHI 6384 Convivencia & Conflict: A Sephardic Cultural History: 711–1492

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EICHA: “TIS BETTER TO HAVE LOVED AND LOST THAN NEVER TO HAVE LOVED AT ALL”

Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you agree with the line (from Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem “A.H.H. Memoriam”) “Tis better to have loved and lost/than never to have loved at all”? Why or why not?
2. Think of a challenge that you experienced twice in your life, with the second one taking place a few years after the first. How did that challenge affect you the second time? What do you think changed between the first time and the second time?
3. In what ways do you think the experience of having the Beit Hamikdash forever altered the Jewish people?

I remember my high school orientation very well. I was starting a new school in a new city, and I was very nervous. The orientation did not go well. I didn’t feel like I had made any friends, even though it seemed like everyone around me had. Instead of getting upset, though, I tried to steel myself against the experience. I came home that night and told my mom: “Mom, it’s fine. I’ll just check out for high school and make friends in college.”

My mom looked at me with a strange face. “That’s probably not the best plan,” she said. “You can’t just ignore a whole stage of your life.”

I think what I failed to understand as a 14-year-old is that there is no such thing as moving forward in time while staying the same. I wanted to shut my eyes, duck underwater for four years and start life at the other end. But that’s not how things work. Every experience, whether good or bad (or, as most

experiences are, some combination of both), affects us in some way, and it *should*, if we are to be feeling, sensitive people.

Eicha teaches the same thing. The first perek of the megillah is filled with two-part *pesukim* that are formulations of contrast. The famous first *pasuk* reads: “*Eicha yashva badad, ha’ir rabati am*” — how is it that you sit in solitude, the city that was great with people. The fourth verse reads, “*Darchei tzion aveilot,*” the roads of Jerusalem are mourning, “*mibli ba-ey moed*” — and they are also missing the usual pilgrims that come for the *Shalosh Regalim*. Much of the chapter continues in this pattern. And of course, this makes sense. The megillah is much more poignant because it is written this way. Reminding us how beautiful and wonderful things once *were*, makes the destruction of Jerusalem that much more painful.

But maybe, in a strange way, there is also some comfort embedded in Yirmiyahu’s language. After all, the Jewish people, at the time of the churban, could have looked around with haunting *déjà vu* and said: “My God. This scene is so familiar. We are becoming wanderers again. We are being sold as slaves again. Jerusalem is in foreign hands. Is this not right where we were hundreds of years ago, before this entire miracle began? What could be more depressing than landing back at the bottom, right where we started?”

But I think this approach would have been flawed. This approach would have been like my freshman year self, who thought that experience does not change you — that if you have two scenarios that appear the same, but are separated by time, they can actually be the same. It would have been like one

who loses a loved one and then says, “Now I am alone again, back to who I was before, before I loved this person in the first place.”

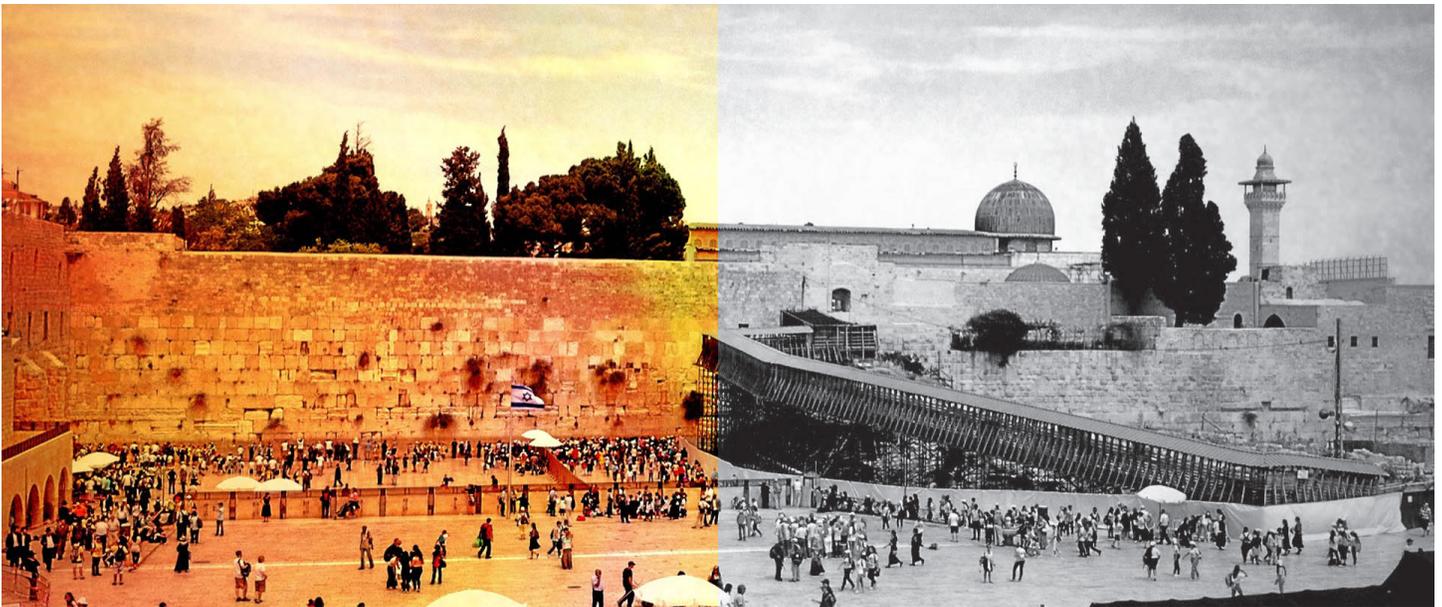
Yirmiyahu’s writing reminds us that this is not the case. In recounting how things were before the churban, Yirmiyahu’s writing reminds us that even though the Beit Hamikdash no longer stands, it once did. By including descriptions of a Jerusalem teeming with people and light, he reminds us that even though we are now in exile, we once inhabited a holy city.

And this *matters*, and gives us strength. Because just like one who has lost a loved one feels depressed, yet strengthened, because of all his loved one taught him, awakened in him, and experienced with him, we are depressed — down one Temple, down one city of justice — but strengthened by having *had* those things in the first place. We are more spiritually attuned because of all the years we saw the Kohen Gadol emerge from the *Kodesh Hakadoshim* on Yom Kippur *bli pega*, unscathed. We are more charitable for all the times widows and orphans were cared for in the city of justice, *ir hatzedek, kiryah ne’emanah*. We possess a broader and deeper understanding of what it means to be a Jew, because we had once established an entire civilization based on the Torah.

The Jewish people may have once been a band of slaves, of Diaspora wanderers — and after the churban, we may well have felt that we were those again. But we were not. Instead, we were Diaspora wanderers who once entered the land of Israel. Who dedicated a Beit Hamikdash. We were Diaspora wanderers who had served in the *kodesh*, offered the *ketoret*,

and housed each other during the *Shalosh Regalim* on a thousand little crowded stone streets, as our homes swelled past capacity, and streams of farmers, baskets of *bikkurim* on their shoulders, paraded by our windows, led by a *chalil* (based on the Mishnah’s description in *Bikkurim* 3:2-4). And we still are all of those things today.

And because we remember, through Yirmiyahu’s words, both our love and our loss, both our great romance with Hashem during the era of the Beit Hamikdash and its horrific collapse, we also demonstrate that we are not a people who are afraid to feel. As Alfred Lord Tennyson says, “’Tis better to have loved and lost/than never to have loved it all,” and this, indeed, is our Jewish philosophy. We are not like the societies in *The Giver*, or *Brave New World*, which choose a lack of pain over any feeling at all. Rather, we are a nation that opened itself to a great covenantal relationship with God, even as all relationships come with pain and retreat. We are a nation that tries to come close, that believes in the beauty, depth, and spiritual enrichment that the encounter with God can offer, even as we know it will also come with disappointment, disillusionment, and loss. The Jewish heart may break, but it is not made of stone. In that merit, may each stone in Jerusalem find its way back to its place, as we merit to see its rebuilding.



IN VIVID BLACK AND WHITE

Gray scale *noun*: a series of regularly spaced tones ranging from black to white through intermediate shades of gray.

Some people paint in color. Others paint in black and white. Then there is the case of the painter, described by world-renowned author and neurologist Oliver Sacks who suddenly became colorblind after an accident. Curiously, the painter still had a strong awareness of color even though he could no longer see it. He knew what he was supposed to see and how it would make him feel, yet he was limited to seeing black and white. His knowledge of color and appreciation for its beauty made the transition to colorblindness especially difficult because he knew exactly what

he was missing.

On Tisha B'Av, we are also confronted with missing something that we once so intimately knew.

The devastating adjustment of the colorblind painter is similar to the experience we encounter on Tisha B'Av. We struggle to experience the black and white of the day when we are surrounded in deep color. We face the crushing loss of central worship while we sit at the packed Kotel. The vibrant streets of Israel challenge our ability to channel sadness over the ruinous destruction of the same city. We are broken in an instant and yet we can clearly recall the excitement of our summer in dazzling color.

We are all colorblind artists. If you only see in black and white, this

exercise will reinforce the loss of central worship. If you don't see in black and white, you'll quickly realize the lack of color. Tisha B'Av reminds us that without the Beit Hamikdash, our world is not as colorful as we often like to think. The following activity is designed to help you navigate through these complex emotions and share with others as we strive to concretize the canvas of our religious lives, helping us make sense of the gray in the sea of color.

Traditionally, paint-by-number kits indicate areas to paint by assigning numbers to each area. In this particular activity, each number corresponds to a discussion question as well. Using any paint-by-number coloring sheet available to you (a

sample is attached), this activity is designed to facilitate family discussion, encouraging each family member to share while coloring in the appropriate number.

What you'll need:

1. Any paint-by-number coloring sheet available to you (or you can use the one printed here)
2. Markers, crayons, or paint

Questions:

1. What is your favorite color? How does it make you feel?
2. Do you feel most happy surrounded by others or alone?
3. What activity most centers and grounds you?
4. What are three objects that make you feel safe?
5. What color would you designate to "loss"? Why?
6. When have you most recently experienced loss?
7. Sunrise or sunset? Which do you prefer? Why?
8. What color would you designate to "hope"? Why?

** Adapted from Erasure: NCSY's Guide for Teens: On Connecting to Loss on Tisha B'Av*



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SPEECH: NOT JUST A SPECTATOR SPORT: A PARENT-CHILD STUDY GUIDE

Appreciating the Loss of the Mikdash

Haven't been to your favorite sports stadium in a while? Haven't been able to attend that game you really wanted to see? Imagine you are told that the stadium is opening up to live audiences in two weeks. But it's only allowed to fill to 30% capacity, so you need to act quickly. Your parents buy the tickets and you are ready to go. You can't believe this is actually happening! It's been such a long time and feels like it's been hundreds of years since you went to the stadium! There are fewer cars than

usual due to capacity limits. Within minutes you get to your seats early and wait. As the start time approaches, the seats begin to fill to the new capacity. But it's five minutes until the start time and you still don't see any players. After twenty minutes people begin to wonder what's going on. Finally, after forty minutes, a message appears on the board: "Thank you for visiting. You have twenty minutes left." What? What is going on? There is no game. The tickets you paid for were simply to visit the place you missed so much.

Questions for Discussion:

1. If this happened to you, what would your reaction be? Would you be satisfied showing up to the stadium without seeing a game? Why?
2. If you are lucky enough, you may have had the opportunity to visit the Kotel. Isn't it amazing? We celebrate the fact that we can visit a site with so much kedusha. So what are we doing sitting on the floor crying or trying to feel sad on Tisha B'Av? We have Eretz Yisrael! We have the Kotel!
3. How do you think the stadium analogy relates to Tisha B'Av?

The Kotel is just like that empty stadium. It may be nice to visit, but it is missing everything that was supposed to be there. In fact, we don't even have the physical structure of the Beis Hamikdash that was the epicenter of the kedusha. When visiting the place where the Beis Hamikdash once stood or looking at pictures, we should be stricken with at least the same disappointment as if we were visiting a barren stadium. Why aren't we? Maybe because we never saw the live show. We never experienced what it was really like during the times of the Mikdash. It is hard to miss something when you don't really understand what you are missing.

I hope it's fair to assume that all of us appreciate that our religion is far more valuable than any sport or entertainment. It would follow logically that we should be devastated that we are lacking a Beis Hamikdash and that we don't even have the physical structure that once served as the center of our religious life. Just thinking about this alone can make the day of Tisha B'Av more meaningful.

Standing Up To Peer Pressure

If we start to delve into the events of Tisha B'Av, we must ask ourselves how we got to this point. How did we lose the holiest structure that represented our connection with Hashem? What was so terrible that it left us with this empty stadium with no game to go to? One answer may be to look at the very first Tisha B'Av, even before there was a Beis Hamikdash. Let's explore the *chet hameraglim* and the *chet of lashon hara*.

After the meraglim return from spying out the Holy Land, the Torah tells us:

ותשא כל העדה ויתנו את קולם ויבכו העם בלילה ההוא.

The entire nation raised their voice and cried out on that night.

Bamidbar 14:1

This was as a result of being informed that they would not physically be able to conquer the inhabitants of the land that they were promised. The Gemara has the following comment on this pasuk:

אמר רבה אמר רב יוחנן: אותו היום ערב תשעב באב היה. אמר הקב"ה הן בכו בכיה של חנם ואני אקבע להם בכיה לדורות.

Raba says in the name of Rav Yochanan: That night (when the meraglim returned) was the eve of Tisha B'Av. Hashem said, "You are crying for no reason, I will give you a reason to cry in future generations."

Sotah 35a

That day became synonymous with destruction and devastation for generations to come. The meraglim spread fear among Bnei Yisroel by speaking lashon hara about Eretz Yisroel, and because of that *chet*, Tisha B'Av became a day of destruction and mourning. However, there were two meraglim who didn't follow the rest of the crowd: Yehoshua and Calev. They did not succumb to the ideas of the other meraglim and withstood the pressure. If we explore the differences between Yehoshua and Calev, we can learn important lessons on how to approach situations of lashon hara, and through this, we can hopefully play a part in bringing the geula.

Questions for Discussion:

4. Moshe changed the name of Hoshea to Yehoshua so that Hashem would help him along the way. Why do you think that the name of Calev was not changed?
5. Rashi tells us that Calev went alone to daven in Chevron at the burial site of the Avos to save him from the plot of the meraglim. Where was Yehoshua? Why didn't Yehoshua go with him?
6. Have you ever been in a situation when somebody pressured you to do something wrong? How did you deal with it? Were you successful?

In a footnote in the 19th chapter of section two in *Shemiras Halashon*, the Chafetz Chaim explains that there are two ways to stand up for what is right when people are failing to do the right thing. One method is to vehemently protest, argue, and clash with these individuals. Another method is to remain quiet, and maybe even initially pretend as if you agree with the wrongdoers, only to reveal your true colors at the last minute.

The first person puts himself at great risk, subjecting himself to both verbal abuse and physical harm by taking an unpopular position. By revealing his true feelings, however, he guards himself from being influenced by others. This was the personality of Yehoshua. Although the second person is safe from physical harm, he is quite vulnerable to succumbing to the influence of the others. This was the personality of Calev.

Through *ruach hakodesh*, Moshe was able to recognize the strengths of both Yehoshua and Calev. Because Yehoshua was at great risk at the beginning, Moshe davened that Hashem should protect him. Calev did not need this prayer at that moment. Fast forward to the encounter between the meraglim and the giants of Eretz Yisrael. Fear and trepidation immediately fell upon the ambassadors of Klal Yisrael. Realizing that he might follow suit with the other meraglim, Calev went to Chevron to daven for help.

Both reactions are appropriate. Some people are more inclined to act like Yehoshua — outwardly bold — and some people are inclined to act like Calev — behaving a quieter way. The important point is the result: not joining

the people doing the wrong thing. Some people feel the need to speak up immediately while others feel it is better to remain quiet at first and react at a later point.

Perhaps we can apply this idea beyond situations that are directly connected to lashon hara. If we emulate the midos of Yehoshua and Calev in other scenarios we can also repair the sin of the meraglim. Any time we are faced with adversity, and the peer pressure is building, we need to make the right decisions. It is not always easy; in fact it is rarely easy, but we can't fall into the same trap that the once highly respected meraglim fell into.

Are you like Yehoshua? Will you tell sinners that they are doing the wrong thing and that you will have no part? Or are you like Calev? Will you go with the flow and then stop and protest when the moment is just right? The Chafetz Chaim is telling us that there is often more than one way to tackle problems. What works for one individual may not necessarily work for another.

Let us try to take these thoughts to help make our Tisha B'Av more meaningful. On this inauspicious day, let us appreciate that there is something missing from our lives. Baruch Hashem we are able to visit Eretz Yisroel and have access to the Kotel. But this is surely not where we want to be! Let us try to learn lessons from those who stood up to the meraglim and apply them to our lives. The challenge of both these tasks is to take what we learned to not only make Tisha B'Av more meaningful, but to enhance our lives moving forward. And then IY”H we can appreciate “game day” at the Beis Hamikdash in its full glory.



Looking to learn more about Megillat Eicha?

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REBUILDING THE BEIT HAMIKDASH WITH LOVE: A PARENT-CHILD STUDY GUIDE

Tisha B'av is a day of conflicting emotions. On the one hand, it is the saddest day of the year; on the other, it is a day that brings hope. By focusing on the causes of the destruction of the Batei Mikdash, we can learn to improve ourselves, which will ultimately lead to the building of the third Beit HaMikdash.

Let us then ask the question: Why did Hashem feel that we, the Jewish People, were no longer worthy of having the Beit HaMikdash — of having Hashem live among us? What led to this sad reality of living in a world that lacks a strong sense of Hashem's presence?

The Gemara, in *Yoma* 9b, famously explains the reason for the destruction of the second Beit HaMikdash:

... אבל מקדש שני, שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצוות ובגמילות חסדים,
מפני מה חרב? מפני שהייתה בו שנאת חנם. ללמדך ששקולה שנאת
חנם כנגד שלש עבירות: עבודה זרה, גילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים.

However, considering that the people during the Second Temple period were engaged in Torah study, observance of mitzvot, and

acts of kindness, and that they did not perform the sinful acts that were performed in the First Temple, why was the Second Temple destroyed? It was destroyed because there was senseless hatred during that period. This comes to teach you that the sin of senseless hatred is equivalent to the three severe transgressions: Idol worship, illicit relations, and bloodshed.

Questions for Discussion:

- 1. What are some senseless reasons that a person may dislike someone — in his class or in his bunk etc.?**
- 2. How can we shift our feelings to not have negative feelings toward another person?**
- 3. Can you think of a time when someone seemed to “just not like you”? How did it make you feel?**

ואם נחרבנו ונחרב העולם עמנו על ידי שנאת חינוס, נשוב להיבנות והעולם עמנו יבנה על ידי אהבת חינוס.

If the reason for our and the world's desolation is because of baseless hatred, then we should work to rebuild ourselves and the world through baseless love.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Orot Hakodesh Vol. III 323-324

Questions for Discussion:

1. What do you think Rav Kook means by the term “*ahavat chinam*” — “baseless love.”
2. What actions can we take to express to other people that we care about them — even without any particular reason?

The basis for the mitzvah to love and care about others is, of course, the pasuk, *ve’ahavta l’rei’acha kamocho* — love your fellow person like yourself. The great importance of this mitzvah can be seen from the following story in the Gemara:

שוב מעשה בגוי אֶחָד שָׁבָא לְפָנֵי שַׁמַּי. אָמַר לוֹ: גִּיּוֹרֵי עַל מִנְתַּ שְׁתִּלַּמְדֵנִי כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה כְּשֶׁאֲנִי עוֹמֵד עַל רֶגֶל אַחַת! דְּחָפוּ בְּאַמַּת הַבְּנֵי שְׂבִידוֹ. בָּא לְפָנֵי הִלֵּל, גִּיּוֹרֵיהֶם. אָמַר לוֹ: דַּעְלָךְ סִנֵּי לְחִבְרָךְ לֹא תַעֲבִיד — זֶה הֵיא כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה, וְאֵיךְ פִּירוּשָׁהּ הוּא, זֵיל גְּמוּרָה.

There was another incident involving one non-Jewish person who came before Shammai and said to Shammai: Convert me, but only if you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot. Shammai pushed him away with the builder’s ruler in his hand. The same non-Jewish person came before Hillel (and made the same request). Hillel converted him and said to him: That which is hateful to you, do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation. Go study.

Shabbat 31a

Questions for Discussion:

1. Hillel’s teaching (above) — “that which is hateful to you, do not do to another,” seems to be the same idea as “Love your fellow person like yourself.” Why do you think Hillel expresses it in a different way than the pasuk?
2. What do you think Hillel meant when he said, “that is the entire Torah” — Isn’t *ve’ahavta l’rei’acha kamocho* only one mitzvah out of 613?!

מצוה על כל אדם לאהוב את כל אחד ואחד מישראל כגופו שנאמר ואהבת לרעך כמוך, לפיכך צריך לספר בשבחו ולחוס על ממונו כאשר הוא חס על ממון עצמו ורוצה בכבוד עצמו.

Each man is commanded to love each and every one of Israel as himself as [Leviticus 19:18] states: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Therefore, one should speak the praises of [others] and show concern for their money just as he is concerned with his own money and seeks his own honor.

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Personal Development 6:3

מצות עשה של דבריהם לבקר חולים ולנחם אבלים ולהוציא המת ולהכניס הכלה וללוות האורחים ... וכן לשמח הכלה והחתן ולסעודם בכל צרכיהם ואלו הן גמילות חסדים שבגופו שאין להם שיעור אף על פי שכל מצות אלו מדבריהם הרי הן בכלל ואהבת לרעך כמוך.

It is a positive commandment of Rabbinic origin to visit the sick, comfort mourners, to prepare for a funeral, prepare a bride, accompany guests ... and also to bring joy to a bride and groom and help them in all their needs. These are deeds of kindness that one performs with his body that have no limit. Even though all of these commandments are of Rabbinic status, they are included in “Love your neighbor as yourself”...

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Mourning 14:1

Questions for Discussion:

1. According to Maimonides (Rambam), what are some of the specific actions we should do to express our love to our fellow Jew?
2. Have you been able to do any of these acts of kindness over the past month (even with the COVID-19 challenges)?
3. Think of ways that you can do one or more of them in the next month — what did you come up with?
4. What types of things can we do that express our concern for someone else’s property?
5. Did you ever return a lost object to someone? In your opinion, is the mitzvah of *hashavat aveidah* a fulfillment of *ve’ahavta l’rei’acha kamocho* as well? Explain.

ואהבת לרעך כמוך ר"ל .. א' שיאהב אותי באמת לא בזיוף, ב' שיתנהג בו כבוד תמיד כי כן ראוי להיות וכמאמר חז"ל, כבוד חברך כמורא רבך, ג' שידרש שלומי תמיד כי כן ראוי לרעים אהובים להיות בשלום תמיד ולדרוש איש בשלום רעהו, ד' שישתתף בצערך, ה' שיקבל אותי בסבר פנים יפות כשאבא לביתך, ו' שידון אותי לכף זכות בכל דבר, ז' שיתנדב בגופו באיזה טרחה קטנה בשבילי והוא ילוני בעמלו לפעמים

בדבר שלא יעמל בו הרבה, ח' שיתנדב להושיע לי בדבר מועט מממונו לפעמים בעת שאצטרך בהלוואה או במתנה דבר קטן ולא ימנע ממני שאלה אחת קטנה כדרך טוב איש חונן ומלוה, ט' שלא יתגאה עלי. "And you shall love your fellow person as yourself." For example ... he should truly and sincerely love him; Second, he should always treat him with respect; Third, he should always seek his well-being; Fourth, he should share in his sorrow; Fifth, he should welcome him with a warm smile (be-sever panim yafot) when he visits his home; Sixth, he should always judge him favorably (le-khaf zekhut) in every matter; Seventh, he should gladly be willing go through a little trouble for his sake; Eighth, that he should help him with a little money when he needs a loan or a small gift, and he shouldn't deny him some minor request; Ninth, he should not act arrogantly toward him. **Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865), Haketav Vehakabalah, Vayikra ch. 19**

Questions for Discussion:

1. Have you recently had the opportunity to help another person, even if it meant giving of your time or money? What help did he/she need?
2. Can you think of someone who would benefit from being greeted with a nice smile?

אמר הה"ק ז"ל שלמד אהבת ישראל מכפרי אחד שהי' במסובה עם כפריים אחרים, וכטוב לבו בין אמר לרעהו אהבת אותי או לא. ויענהו אהבתיך למאד. ואומר הכפרי אתה תאמר אהבתיני ולא אדע מה יחסר לי, הלא אם באמת אהבתיני. הידעת מחסורי, ויחרש ולא דבר מאוס, מזה למד כי אהבת ישראל הוא להרגיש כל מחסורם ולסבול כל מכאובם.

I learned from a non-Jew how to properly love a fellow Jew. Once I passed by a tavern and saw two non-Jewish gentlemen hugging each other. One asked his friend, "Do you really love me?" His friend replied, "certainly — quite sincerely." The first person said, "How could you say you really love me if you don't know what I'm missing?!" At that time, I learned that no man from Israel really loves his friend unless he knows what he is missing.

R. Moshe Leib Erbllich of Sasov, Torat HaRamal, Likutim 48

Questions for Discussion:

1. According to Rav Moshe Leib of Sasov, in order to properly fulfill *ve'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocho*, what does a person need to understand about other people?
2. Think of someone you know — and then try to think of three things that person needs. How can you help that person get what he/she needs?

Just like you love yourself [naturally] and not for the purpose of fulfilling any mitzvah, similarly, you should love your fellow Jew [naturally] and not just for the purpose of fulfilling the mitzvah [of ve'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocho].

R. Natan Tzvi Finkel, The Alter of Slabodka

Questions for Discussion:

1. According to the Alter of Slabodka, what does the word "*kamocho*" (like yourself) teach us?
2. According to this view, what should be the main reason that we love other people?

כתיב לא תקום ולא תטור את בני עמך היך עבידא הוה מקטע קופד ומחת סכינא לידי תחזור ותמחי לידיה.

It states, "Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge." What is an example? Someone was cutting meat and mistakenly cut his hand with the knife. Would he in turn cut the other hand?

Yerushalmi, Nedarim 9:4

Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the parable brought by the Yerushalmi explain the reason behind the prohibition against taking revenge against another Jew?
2. Can the same parable be used to explain the reason for the mitzvah of *ve'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocho*?

והנה, על ידי קיום הדברים הנזכרים לעיל, להיות גופו נבזה ונמאס בעיניו, רק שמחתו תהיה שמחת הנפש לבדה, הרי זו דרך ישרה וקלה לבא לידי קיום מצות "ואהבת לרעך כמוך" לכל נפש מישראל, למגדול ועד קטן. כי מאחר שגופו נמאס ומתעב אצלו, והנפש והרוח – מי יודע

גדולתן ומעלתן בשורשן ומקורן באלקים חיים. בשגם שכולן מתאימות ואב אחד לכלנה, ולכן נקראו כל ישראל אחים ממש, מצד שורש נפשם בה' אחד, רק שהגופים מחולקים. ולכן העושים גופם עיקר ונפשם טפלה, אי אפשר להיות אהבה ואחוה אמתית ביניהם.

The command to love every Jew flows from understanding the fundamental principle that unifies all Jews. Even though there is a physical separation between the bodies of the Jewish People, their souls are united at their divine source, because He is like a father to everyone. Only a person who relates to his soul as having primary importance, and his body as secondary, can sincerely feel love toward every Jew. However, in the case of those who give major consideration to their bodies, while regarding their souls as of secondary importance, they cannot feel true love toward their fellow Jew.

Sefer Tanya, ch. 32

Question for Discussion:

According to the *Tanya*, only someone who views his soul as primary and his body as secondary can truly love another Jew. Why is this so?

If a Jewish person loves another person as he loves himself, then the love is doubled — for him and for his fellow person. The word “אהבה” (love) multiplied by two is the same gematriya as the name of Hashem — שם הוייה (the word אהבה which equals 13 multiplied by 2 = 26). And this is the meaning of the pasuk, “love your fellow person like yourself” — if there is a double love — your fellow person and you, then “I am Hashem” — the name of Hashem is the result.

The Maggid of Trisk

I appoint the heavens and the earth to testify about me that my feelings of love are great, and I literally feel love with all my heart and all my soul, for our whole nation and all of

its individuals and all of its groups, because I believe with complete faith that every part of the nation is an integral and unique part of the holy and wonderful structure that is the Jewish People in its entirety.

Rav Kook, Ma’amarei Hara’ayah Vol. II pg. 523

Questions for Discussion:

1. Did Rav Kook love every Jew — even the sinners?
2. Why or why not? What is the reason he gives?

Before a person begins to daven in shul, he should accept upon himself the mitzvah of “Love your fellow person like yourself.” He should have in mind to love all of the Jewish people, each and every one, like himself, because through this, his prayers will go up as part of the prayers of all of the Jewish People, and then it will be able to rise up high and be effective ...

The Arizal quoted in Introduction to Sha’ar Hakavanot

Questions for Discussion:

1. According to the Arizal, what is the connection between loving all Jews and davening to Hashem?
2. Do you think it would take you a long time or a short time before davening to think about the mitzvah of “Love your fellow person like yourself”? Why?

Let us hope that we are able to fulfill the mitzvah of *ve’ahavta l’rei’acha kamocha* and strengthen our relationship with others — caring for them and helping them. Through this, please God, we will witness the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash — soon and in our own time.

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YESHIVA UNIVERSITY-RABBI ISAAC ELCHANAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Tisha B'av 5780 Israel Program

THURSDAY, JULY 30 • 9 AV, 5780

9:00 a.m. Israel Time



Kinnot Recital and Explanation

Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb

*Rabbi, Ganei Ha'Elia, Ramat Beit Shemesh,
Rebbe, Yeshivat Har Etzion*

*Sponsored by Rebeca & Saul Lubetski and Noa & Jay Zwiebel
In partnership with Yeshivat Har Etzion and Kehillat Haela*

2:30 p.m. Israel Time



Why do we need the Beit Hamikdash? Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

7:30 p.m. Israel Time



Neilah of Tisha B'av: Thoughts and Feelings Rabbi Chaim Eisenstein

Rebbe, YU RIETS Israel Kollel

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Tisha B'av 5780

THURSDAY, JULY 30 - 9 AV, 5780 - 9:30 A.M.-6:00 P.M. EDT



9:30 a.m. EDT: Two Options for Online Kinnot
Rabbi Yaakov Glasser
David Mitzner Dean, YU CJF

Rabbi Mordechai Willig
Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS



1:15 p.m. EDT

The Tragedy we Commemorate on Tisha B'Av is Not – Really – the Destruction of the Bet Hamikdash

Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

University Professor of Jewish History & Jewish Thought, YU • Senior Scholar, YU CJF

Sponsored in appreciation of Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter & Yeshiva University and in commemoration of the 42nd Yahrzeit for Helen Friedman Kuflik, Hodel Ruchama bat Avraham Shlomo v'Etta Malka, and in memory of Betty Blum Rockoff, Bryna Ita bas Chanoch Henoch V'Bayna Rachel, by Dr. Avi and Shuli Rockoff of Boston.



2:15 p.m. EDT

Jeremiah's Dilemma
Rabbi David Fohrman

*Founder/ CEO, Aleph Beta Academy
Guest Instructor, RIETS
In partnership with AlephBeta.org*



3:00 p.m. EDT

Building a Life of Bracha & Simcha in Every Situation

Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

*Joel And Maria Finkle Visiting Israel
Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS*



3:45 p.m. EDT

**The Road to Redemption:
Holding Fast To G-d**

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

Noted Lecturer and Author



4:30 p.m. EDT

**Eis Lilchom: When
Machlokes is Worth It**

Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz

Director, RIETS Semikhah Program



5:15 p.m. EDT

Churban, Nechama & Geulah
Prof. Smadar Rosensweig

Professor of Bible, Stern College for Women



6:00 p.m. EDT

**Special Tisha B'av Kumzits
with Rabbi Mordechai Willig
and his Sons**

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS