



Partners In Torah

San Diego-Los Angeles-Ventura

Take home Dvar Torah

תשפ"ד ב'אב Tisha B'Av

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Hello, Welcome!

Partners In Torah is a community-wide, independent and inclusive adult education program focusing on understanding Jewish relevancy to our lives by studying text most interesting to each participant.

Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour each week, friendships are forged between mentors and mentees.

Partners in Torah has proven to be effective at reclaiming the rich legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and guidance for many who have, until now, lacked access.

Thank you for joining us!

Please encourage friends to join you in participating so that we may grow together as a community.

Yesterday, was Rosh Chodesh Av, the first day of the month of Av. The Code of Jewish Law (551:1) teaches us:

א) משנכנס אב ממעטין בשמחה; ובר ישראל דאית ליה דינא בהדי כותי, לישתמיט מיניה דריע מזליה

1) When the month of Av enters, we must minimize our happiness, and a Jewish person who has a court case with a gentile, should try to avoid it because the month of Av has a bad mazal.

Rosh Chodesh Av begins the mourning period called “The Nine Days,” and, because of this, during these days it is customary not to eat meat or drink wine, except on Shabbos. The Nine Days are a countdown to the 9th of Av, the infamous day in our history called Tish-ah B’ Av, literally the 9th of Av.

Next Tuesday night is Tisha B’Av, the 9th day of Av, and there will be no Partners learning because of the fast on that day. (The fast will end during Partners, and people will need to eat.) Aside from Yom Kippur, which is a biblical fast, this is the only fast that begins at sundown, the beginning of a Jewish day. All other Rabbinic fasts start at daybreak and end with sundown that day.

On Tisha B’Av all Jews are in mourning for the two Holy Temples that were destroyed on that day. As such, all Jews have the legal status of mourners, and just as mourners are prohibited from wearing leather shoes, bathing and smearing oils, and marital relations, so too these laws apply on Tisha B’Av. Mourners are also prohibited from learning Torah, because the study of Torah brings one great joy, and so too on Tisha B’Av it is forbidden to study Torah (other than topics dealing with the destruction).

The Mishna (Taanit 4:6) lists five calamitous events that occurred on Tish-ah B’Av.

בְּתִשְׁעָה בְּאָב נִגְזַר עַל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שְׁלֹא יִכְנָסוּ לְאֶרֶץ, וְחָרַב הַבַּיִת בְּרֵאשׁוֹנָה וּבְשֵׁנִיָּה,
וְנִלְכְּדָה בֵּיתָר, וְנִחְרְשָׁה הָעִיר

1. Hashem decreed that our forefathers could not go into Israel, they would die in the desert.
2. The first Holy Temple was destroyed
3. The second Holy Temple was destroyed
4. The city of Betar was captured
5. The site of the Holy Temples was plowed like a field

Many other major more recent calamities happened on the 9th of Av.

1. In 1290, on Tisha B'Av, the Jews were expelled from England.
2. In 1492, the last day that a Jewish foot was allowed in Spain was the 9th of Av. A great historian said, "If the King of Spain knew how much faith and trust in Hashem he was planting in the Jewish people's hearts by expelling them on the 9th of Av, he would have rescinded his decree, being that on Tisha B'Av they realized that it was clearly the hand of Hashem that was guiding them in their difficult times, and that He must have a profound and exalted reason for it."
3. World War I started on Tisha B'Av.

What makes this day in the Jewish calendar prone to misfortune?

It began in the wilderness when on this day the spies returned from their tour of Israel and gave their scathing report, causing the Jewish people to reject the great land that Hashem had promised to Avraham Avinu and his descendants.

In doing this, they revealed a lack of אמונה – trust - in Hashem’s ability to take them into Israel and subdue the enemies there. This sin prevented them from entering the Promised Land, and whenever the Jewish people are guilty of that same sin, they subject themselves to the same fate as occurred to the Jewish people in the wilderness.

When in the diaspora, we forget that we need Hashem and think that we are like any other nation, Hashem, once again, shows us through exile that, indeed, we are His nation no matter what. The very nation that we seek to blend into rejects us and tells us, “Dirty Jew! Get out of here!” In other words, *“You are Hashem’s nation whether you like it or not. You cannot be part of us!”*

This problem was at the root of the destruction of the Holy Temples. When the Jewish people stopped seeing the Temples, which represented their connection to Hashem, as the focus of their lives and became involved with other matters, they in essence rendered the Holy Temples obsolete. Once they were no longer functioning in their proper capacity, it was possible to destroy them.

ו פסקה ג פרשה - השירים שיר רבה מדרש
טחנת טחינא קמחא הוי

The Midrash teaches us that those who destroyed the Holy Temples only destroyed buildings *whose stones were already ground up*.

The antidote to what was at the root of the Temples destruction, namely a lack of trust in Hashem, is to have in our hearts a strong deep אמונה - trust - in Hashem. This is our lifetime task, to internalize in any way possible that Hashem is a reality, and that He controls the world and everything in it (including me). In today’s world, this is a very daunting task. When we have אמונה in Hashem in our hearts, we have

Hashem's presence, the שכינה -in our hearts. In this way, our very own hearts serve as a sanctuary where Hashem dwells. Each one of us serves as a miniature Holy Temple, where Hashem's presence is extant. We are each rebuilding the Third Holy Temple in our hearts, individually and collectively, by preparing the sanctuary for Hashem's arrival.

This is the purpose of mourning for the Holy Temples. By focusing on what we lost, Hashem's dwelling place among us, we should yearn and aspire to have the Holy Temple back so that we can once again live the holy life that our forefathers did when the Holy Temples stood. The mourning is designed to awaken within us a thirst for having Hashem dwell among us again so that we can strengthen and grow in our relationship with Him. If we only had the Holy Temple, our work would be done. We would have the place to see Hashem's presence clearly, what we have been struggling our whole lives to accomplish.

We see this idea from King David.

At one time, King David expressed in a Psalm how at one point in his life he was beginning to question Hashem. He says (73:2):

(ב) וְאֲנִי בְמַעַט נָטִיּוּ רַגְלִי בְּאֵין שִׁפְכוּ אֲשֶׁרִי

2) As for me, my feet almost veered off the path, in no time, my legs almost left Your path.

King David goes on to explain the issues that confronted him and shook his faith. The evil people prosper and have no worries. They go through life and everything works out perfect for them. King David uses a full 14 verses to describe how it seems that there is no Judge and no judgment for the evil people in the world. What saved King David? He tells us in verse 17.

(ז) עַד אָבוֹא אֶל מְקוֹדְשֵׁי קָל אָבִינָה לְאַחֲרֵיתָם

17) *Until I come to the Sanctuary of Hashem, and I think about their end.*

What was it about the sanctuary that restored King David's faith? Because of the intense holiness there, when one entered the sanctuary, the presence of Hashem overwhelmed him, and he could have no doubt about Hashem's reality. Moreover, the Mishna in Pirkei Avot (5:5) tells us that ten miracles constantly occurred in the Holy Temple, which were also proof of Hashem's presence. When the Holy Temple was around, there was a clear way to see Hashem; all you had to do was go there.

Unfortunately, there are also those who dismiss the existence of Hashem for similar reasons to King David. They see evil people prosper and righteous people suffer, and the only conclusion they can come to is that there is no god. Many others are just so caught up in their day-to-day existence trying to make ends meet, or trying to enjoy the pleasures of life, they just never think about the existence of Hashem. *"Don't disturb me with that trivial issue, I am busy."*

Because we do not have the service of the Holy Temple, the prospect of a godless world seems feasible. But when the Holy Temple would be in full service, it would be impossible to deny the existence of Hashem. In the times of King Solomon, the nations of the world would come to see the Holy Temple. There was no question that Hashem existed. It could be experienced firsthand in the Holy Temple. It could also be seen in the holy, elevated lifestyle that the Jewish people lived. Their lifestyle served as an example of the appropriate way that Hashem recommends one to live their life. Even today, Orthodox communities the world over are oases of charity and kindness to all members of the community. They are a paradigm of a community caring for each other, helping all in need.

There is also another aspect to the yearning for the Holy Temple, and that is to restore honor and glory of Hashem. Hashem is the source of all blessing in the world. Nobody has anything in this world without Hashem deciding that he should have it; our health, our wealth and everything in between. Hashem provides us with so many luxuries. All the delicious fruits and vegetables that we enjoy. The variety of flavors, textures, shapes and colors, is simply dazzling. Does Hashem owe us anything that he makes life so enjoyable for us?

We owe Hashem everything, but what does He get? Ignored! So many people enjoy the blessings Hashem has bestowed upon them and think that *they* are the source of their blessing. It is they, who, through their own wisdom and efforts have created all that they have. Mention Hashem to them and they will laugh at you. You still believe in that ancient stuff? Where *exactly* do you see Him? It's all in your mind. In 2024, there is no reason to believe in god. In today's world, if you do believe in a creator, in a living G-d who is involved in every aspect of your life and the entire world, you are considered a fool. Belief in a creator is archaic and antiquated.

This is the greatest travesty in the world! Those of us who recognize the goodness of Hashem, and who understand that He is the source of all the blessing in the world, should feel the injustice of Hashem being ignored by so many. We should want the whole world to recognize Hashem for His goodness and show Hashem gratitude for all that He has done for them. It is inappropriate that Hashem be ignored like this!

There is another layer of depth to this. The Talmud (Berachot 3a) tells the following story.

פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך ונכנסתי לחורבה אחת מחורבות :תניא אמר רבי יוסי ירושלים להתפלל בא אליהו זכור לטוב ושמר לי על הפתח... ואמר לי בני מה קול שמעת בחורבה זו ואמרתי לו שמעתי בת קול שמנהמת כיונה ואומרת אוי לבנים שבעונותיהם החרבתי את ביתי ושרפתי את היכלי והגליתים לבין האומות ואמר לי חייך וחיי ראשך לא שעה זו בלבד אומרת כך אלא בכל יום ויום שלש פעמים אומרת כך

Rabbi Yossie said. Once when I was travelling, I entered a broken-down building to pray. Eliyahu the Prophet came and waited for me at the door... When I finished, he said to me, "My son, what voice did you hear when you were in that ruin?" I told him that I heard a heavenly voice crowing like a dove saying, "Woe to the children who because of their sins, I destroyed my house (the Holy Temple) and I burned my sanctuary, and I exiled my children amongst the nations of the world." He then said to me, "I swear that it is not just now that Hashem says these laments, but each and every day, three times a day Hashem says this."

We see that Hashem laments that He had to destroy the Holy Temple and exile His children, dispersing them among the nations. He wishes to once again have the deep and close relationship we had while the Temples stood. It is as if Hashem is in pain, the way a parent would be when their child has left the house under difficult conditions. We are Hashem's children, and He wants us back. And, as His children, we should also want to go back to our father's home to once again receive His love and warmth.

The Sages use the following metaphor: A king had to send his son out of the palace to teach him a lesson. He sent him to live in the forest, hoping that he would see the folly of his ways, ask his father for forgiveness, and return to the palace. The king sent some of his men to keep an eye on him to make sure that he was okay. The most dreaded report that the king could receive from his men is that his son has forgotten that he came from the palace. He has acclimated to life in the

forest and feels completely at home there and has no desire to ever return to his father.

In the same sense, if we are so lost and far removed from the Holy Temple that we don't even have a desire to return to our Father's house, this is the greatest blow to Hashem.

Eliyahu the Prophet told Rabbi Yossie one more thing.

ולא זו בלבד אלא בשעה שישראל נכנסין לבתי כנסיות ולבתי מדרשות ועונין יהא
שמיה הגדול מבורך הקדוש ברוך הוא מנענע ראשו ואומר אשרי המלך שמקלסין
אותו בביתו כך

Not only that, but when the Jewish people enter their Shuls and study halls, and answer to the Kaddish "May Hashem's great name be blessed forever and ever" Hashem nods with His head and says, "How lucky is the king who is praised this way in his home."

The refrain of the Kaddish is a request to Hashem that He restore His kingdom to the world. He should bring the Mashiach immediately and restore the Kingdom of David. When we say this with understanding and feeling, we are requesting to restore the close relationship that we had with Him again! This request on our part brings Hashem the greatest pleasure. *All is not lost! They still remember me! They want to return to My home!*

The Talmud (Shabbat 31b) takes this concept a step further.

אמר רבא בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין אומרים לו צפית לישועה דבר
Rava said (after a person leaves this world) that when they bring him in for his judgment, they ask him, "Did you look forward to the final redemption?"

Rava is teaching us that it is our obligation to yearn and anticipate the coming of the Mashiach. When we come upstairs for our judgment, they are going to ask us, “Did you yearn to return to your Father’s home?” Or did you get so comfortable in the forest that you forgot that you lived in the palace? Your Father was waiting for you to repent for your sin and return home.

This is what Tisha B’Av is about. Not so much about dwelling on the past and what was, but rather focusing on the future and what we want to happen. We want the Holy Temple back! We want Hashem to send the Mashiach who will restore the Kingdom of David, Hashem’s kingdom to the world. We want Hashem to be recognized by every single creature on the planet!

Maimonides sets this down as number 12 of his 13 principles of our faith.

יב - אֲנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. בְּבִיאַת הַמָּשִׁיחַ. וְאֶף עַל פִּי שְׂיִתְמַהֵמָה. עִם כָּל זֶה
אַחֲכָה לוֹ בְּכָל יוֹם שְׂיָבוֹא

12. I believe with complete belief in the coming of the Mashiach. And even though he may tarry, nevertheless, I will wait for him with every coming day.

From the words of Maimonides, it seems that the first thing I should ask when I wake up in the morning is, “Did he come yet? Is he here?”

There is a question on Maimonides. We understand why it is important to yearn for the Mashiach to come, as we have just explained. But why does this qualify as one of the *principles* of Judaism? **What is lacking now in our service to Hashem without Mashiach?**

The answer is that even though we want Hashem's kingdom to be recognized in the world, it is not for Hashem that we want that. Hashem needs no recognition from us, and all the praise and thanks that we give add nothing to Hashem.

Hashem created this world so that He could give us pleasure. We earn the pleasure by creating a closeness to Him through learning His Torah and performing His mitzvot. Hashem does not want His kingdom restored so that He should be recognized and receive the attention due Him, rather He wants us to recognize Him so He can give us reward for recognizing Him! We want Hashem to be able to fulfill His purpose for creating the world.

To think that the world can continue as is, with the glory of Hashem trampled and ignored, is to accept that Hashem's purpose for creating the world has failed. It is entertaining the notion that the world will never reach its perfection and that Hashem's plan will never happen. Of course, this is not possible. Hashem's plan must succeed no matter what. He will see to it that it comes to fruition. This is a principle of Judaism. Hashem's plan will always succeed. Therefore, the coming of Mashiach is absolute. It cannot be any other way. There will come the day when all of humanity will recognize Hashem as the King of the universe. When this happens, Hashem will be able to fulfill His desire of rewarding them with the pleasure He created them to have.

In considering current events, it could very well be that this is where Hashem is leading us with all the concerning events that are unfolding every day. The world has never seen such an insecure time, when no one knows what will happen next.

The land of Israel is in great danger. Millions of Jews in Israel find themselves in the crosshairs of a crazed enemy bent on their annihilation. Their regional proxies are poised to join the fray from

close, at a moment's notice. Can anyone predict what will happen next? What options do we have?

We have only one option, and that is to put our trust in Hashem. We can rely **only on Hashem**, for **only He can save us**. Having אמונה - trust -in Hashem at this special time in history, is the antidote to the godless world, and prepares the road for the final redemption, the Mashiach.

Let us resolve on this Tisha B'Av to yearn for the glory of Hashem to return to the world through the coming of Mashiach who will build the third Holy Temple. We can actualize the yearning when praying with a minyan, when we say the refrain of the kaddish,

יְיָ הוֹדוּ וְיִשְׁמְחוּ לְפָנֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ מְבָרַךְ לְעֹלָם וְלְעֹלָמֵי עַלְמֵיָא יְיָ תְבָרֵךְ

May the great name of Hashem be blessed for ever and ever with feeling and understanding. This will bring great pleasure to Hashem that his children are seeking to return home to His love and closeness. If enough of us do this, we can be sure that we are doing our share to bring the Mashiach, hopefully, speedily in our days.