

The Month of Av:

Tisha B'Av Torah – Yearning to Rebuild

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

What is this Temple Business all about?

When I first came to Israel, to the *Kotel* (Western Wall) I was impressed with the Golden Mosque. When the woman from the Yeshiva, whom I had just met, told me, “We are going to get rid of it and build our own Temple in its place,” I was appalled. Here, I came from the tolerant Denmark and believed in the spirituality and rights of all people, and then my own religion again showed itself to be utterly narrow-minded and chauvinistic about its own rites, to the exclusion of everything which is beautiful and valuable to others. I had no idea of what the Temple represented in Judaism, and why it had been the main part of our prayer for thousands of years. I didn’t even know it was mentioned in our prayers at all. As I started to learn in yeshiva, I still did not understand why we were mourning on *Tisha B'Av*, but over the years I gradually got an idea of what this Temple business was all about.

Hashem – The Soul of the World

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi explains that G-d is the soul of the world... In the same way that our body and soul are connected by means of eating, G-d is connected with the world by means of the spiritual food of the Temple sacrifices. When the human body is properly nourished it is able to receive guidance from the soul. The soul does not inhabit the body in a physical sense, but rather is the body’s ruler and guide. Just as the soul benefits from the food we eat indirectly, so does the sacrificial offerings maintain the Jewish People in ‘good health’ and enable us to receive G-d’s Divine influence (*Kuzari* 2:26). Just as in the human body it is the breath of life which unites the body and soul, so does the fire of the sacrifices unite the Divine Presence with the physical world. Today, when we do not have the Temple we feel scattered and lost as the scattered bones of Yechezkiel’s vision. Nevertheless, these residual ‘bones,’ which once supported our head, heart, breath, soul and intellect, are genuine remains of our full natural vitality...” (*Kuzari* 2:29).

Finally Shaking our Scattered Bones Together

We can definitely feel the stirring as our ‘scattered bones’ are beginning to come together. I was moved when watching a u-tube of an elder chareidi Yiddish accented rabbi in black garbs leading his yeshiva in the recital of *tehillim* (psalms) for the welfare of the IDF! Something new in the *achdut* (unity) of the segments of Israel which I hadn’t experienced until now. I’m positive that this *achdut* between the diverse segments of Israel is what will bring the Mashiach. No wonder that Rav Nissim Shalom declared that his grandfather appeared to him in a dream and revealed to him that the Mashiach is at his door. If you still live outside Israel, I’m urging you to get ready to join us here. Things are definitely accelerating and you won’t want to miss the boat! A soldier in Gaza is amazed by the unity and elevated spirit he encounters in Israel. Almost every hour a car shows up overflowing with food, snacks, cold drinks, socks, underwear, hygiene supplies, backgammon and more. They’re coming from the North and the Center, from manufacturers, from companies and



private businesses, from prisons, *chareidim* and Settlers, from Tel Aviv and even Saviyon. Chabad helps soldiers put on *tefillin*, while Breslov are dancing joyously with the soldiers. The *chareidim* are coming from their yeshivot to ask the names of the soldiers with their mothers' names so that the whole yeshiva can pray for them. The Army Rabbinate has been giving out *tzitzit* that wick away sweat by the hundreds. Almost the entire Special Forces unit has started wearing them. It's become the new fashion! They have been nicknamed "*Shachpatzitzti*" (a combination of the Hebrew term for body armor and *tzitzit*). I received an email from one of my students saying, "I saw it at the Central bus station, people are handing out t-shirts talking about unity in Israel! *Chareidim* are handing out Shabbat candles, and stopping people to recite *tehillim*.... the atmosphere in Yerushalayim is beautiful and electric." As we mourn our fallen soldiers, we are growing closer and closer together realizing Hashem's amazing miracles, protecting His people from the evil missiles aimed at destroying us.

May we keep intensify the strengthening of our *achdut*, heartfelt prayers and acts of love for our fellow Jews. May our hearts open to receive the renewed reality when the Mashiach will lead us all together to the perfected world!

The Sequence of Creation: Building, Destroying and Rebuilding

Rav Chia Rabba said, in the beginning of the Creation of the world, G-d foresaw the Temple, built, destroyed and rebuilt. "In the beginning G-d created," (*Bereishit* 1:1) – built. "And the land was void and desolate," (*Bereishit* 1:2) – Behold destroyed. "Let there be light," (*Bereishit* 1:3) – behold rebuild and improved (*Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* 2:5). This Midrash teaches us that the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple was already incorporated in G-d's master-plan from the beginning of Creation. Why did Hashem plan to destroy our Temple before it was even built? Perhaps we can compare this to the fact that every Jewish fetus learns the entire Torah in-vitro, yet at birth the angels strike him and all his Torah is forgotten. Throughout his life in this world, he has an innate yearning for the Torah of his womb. Similarly, Hashem placed the first human-being in the Garden of Eden knowing that He would sin and be expelled from Paradise, in order that we would be imbued with an innate yearning to return to the Garden.

Growing Fruits through Disintegration of the Seed

Through the destruction and downfall, the potential of something even greater is created. "The day that the Temple was destroyed Mashiach was born" (*Eichah Rabbah* 1:51). G-d has a secret and wise design for keeping us in exile for so long. This plan can be compared to the process of disintegration which a seed undergoes when it falls into the ground. As far as the human eye can see, the seed is transformed into earth and water as it rots. No trace is left of the seed itself. The truth, however, is that through Divine wisdom the seed dominates and influences the earth and the water, absorbing and transforming them into its own substance. This Divinely bestowed nature of the seed causes it to develop from one stage to the next, refining the external elements and using them to reach its initial stages of growth. After it takes root, the seed gradually expels its outer husk and other extraneous elements until the pure essence of the original seed begins to appear. In time the seed will have the ability to develop into fruits that duplicates the fruit from

which the seed originally derived (*Kuzari* 4:22-23). This is what happened to the generations of Jews as well. Our grandparents left the Torah world and their children destroyed their Jewish homes by raising us with minimal Jewish values. However, the Jewish seed will always remain even in other external garments. Now the grandchildren and the great grandchildren are coming back to Torah, taking with us all the lessons of exile transforming them to become part of the Jewish experience. Although on the outside things may seem like they are decomposing and rotting, it is only part of the disintegration process which soon will yield its fruits.

Seeing Her Nakedness

“Yerushalayim has grievously sinned; therefore she has become as one unclean; all that honored, despise her, because they have seen her nakedness...” (*Eichah* 1:8). The Talmud explains that “her nakedness” refers to the way the gentiles, who destroyed our Temple, related to the embrace of the golden cherubs in the Temple, as if it was, G-d forbid, pornography. Reish Lakish said, when the idol-worshippers entered the sanctuary, they saw the cherubs embracing one another. They brought out the cherubs to the marketplace and exclaimed, “Israel whose every blessing and curse is fulfilled is involved with these kinds of things!” They immediately despised Israel, as it states, “all that honored her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness” (*Babylonian Talmud, Yoma* 54b). How would it then be possible that the enemies “saw her nakedness” when they put Jerusalem in siege? It is known that the cherubs are only facing one another when Israel is doing Hashem’s will (*Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra* 99a). How could it then be possible that the cherubs were embracing one another at the time of the destruction of the Temple, when Israel was not doing Hashem’s will?

Separation Reawakens Love and Yearning

When true lovers are forced to separate from each other their love intensifies. Then the love between them is aroused even more, as their inner love is brought out to the surface, like the case of David and Yonatan when they had to separate from one another. The embrace of the cherubs therefore, represents the intensified love between Hashem and His people during the time of the destruction of the Temple (Rabbi Baruch Epstein, *Torah Temima, Eichah* 1:8). Just as G-d’s love for Israel was heightened at the time of separation, which the destruction of the Temple entailed, the yearning of Israel for redemption was intensified during exile. *Kuzari* explains that this love and yearning for the Holy Land helps speed the fulfillment and realization of the awaited promise, as it is said, “You will rise and have compassion on Zion, when its time to be favored will come, when the appointed time will come; when your servants will take pleasure in her stones and bestow their favor on her dust. (*Tehillim* 102:14-15) This teaches us that Jerusalem will be rebuilt only when Jewry yearns for it to the extent that even its stones and dust are precious to us (*Kuzari* 5:27). G-d has incorporated the lowly state of exile within his master plan of Creation in order that we intensify our yearning for redemption, and thereby raise up the entire creation to become Hashem’s Sanctuary. It’s happening right now, as Hashem’s conduct in the world is shifting from hidden to revealed!