ראש חדש אב, תשעו August 5, 2016

פרשת מסעי

Turning darkness into light

R’ Dessler[[1]](#footnote-2) tells us in the name of his Rebbi that time doesn’t pass by us rather we pass through time.When a given time of year comes around, we relive it. An example of this is Shavuos as when it comes, we experience Matan Torah again.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Tisha Bav is known to be a day of tragedy[[3]](#footnote-4) and as the Gemara says אתם בכיתם וגו'; you cried a crying without cause therefore I will establish crying throughout the generations on this day.[[4]](#footnote-5) The word to cry- בכי- means confusion as in והעיר שושן נבוכה.[[5]](#footnote-6) The word for tears isדמעה. This is related to the termדמאי; produce that one isn’t sure if it was tithed, as it expresses the idea of confusion.Now we can explain whyדמע; tear, and מדע; why, are comprised of the same letters, as a question symbolizes confusion. When one cries, he feels lost. So, what occurs when one cries? Water streams forth from his eyes as water is a dissolver and this is how he feels- dissolved, low. This also explains why one can’t talk when he is crying,since he feels confused.

The Zohar[[6]](#footnote-7) comments onותצפנהו שלשה ירחים; she hid Moshe for 3 months,that it also refers to the 3 months of Tamuz, Av and Teves. In these months, the attribute of Hashem’s kindness in the world is hiddenfrom us.

During this mourning period we observe certain restrictions such as not taking a haircut, refraining from listening to music and so on.[[7]](#footnote-8) The Noda Biyehuda[[8]](#footnote-9) during the 3 weeks wouldn’t eat anything from animals- no fish, meat and the like. From Rosh Chodesh Av until Tisha Bav, he would only eat dry bread with ashes. He would not sleep in a bed rather on chairs and would have a pillow for his head.

We know that although at times life seems bitter, it is all for the best.[[9]](#footnote-10) The same applies to this period of the 3 weeks which culminates with Tisha Bav, a day rooted in Geula. Thus in the system known as את בש, in which the first letter of the א-ב corresponds to the last, the first day of Pesach (א)lines up with [[10]](#footnote-11)תשעה באב- ת.[[11]](#footnote-12) With this we can grasp why this month is called מנחם אב as it a consolation for us knowing that in the future when the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt, these will be days of happiness.

This idea is shown to us in Megilas Rus whereנעמיsaid[[12]](#footnote-13)המר ש-די לי מאד; Hashem has dealt bitterly with me. Taking the first letters of these words**ה**מר **ש**-די **ל**י **מ**אד, we notice it spellsשלמה, since what appeared to be bitter was setting the way for the birth of Shlomo who would build the Beis Hamikdash. So, it all turned out for good.[[13]](#footnote-14)

The Pasuk there concludes with the word מאד. The Mishna tells us on בכל **מאד**ך that whatever measure Hashem metes out to you, whether good or bad, thank him as we should thank Hashem even if an occurrence seems negative.[[14]](#footnote-15)The letters that precede that ofמאד are גלת; exile, as ג is beforeד, לis before מ and תis before א. On the other hand, the letters that come afterמאד spell בנה (ב is after א, נis after מ and הis after ד) which refers to בנה בניתי; built a house of habitation for Hashem.[[15]](#footnote-16)

With this we can graspמשכרתך **שלמה** מעם ה'; may your payment be full from Hashem, which can also be interpreted as referring to Shlomo.[[16]](#footnote-17)We should merit to see the building of the Beis Hamikdash speedily in our days.

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 Shabbos relief

The Gemara says כיון ששבת ווי אבדה נפש; once one has completed Shabbos, woe, he has lost the soul.[[17]](#footnote-18)R’ Moshe Kobriner gives us a novel interpretation and says[[18]](#footnote-19) the Nefesh removes(אבדה) the woe and pain through Shabbos. Indeed, we sing in the Zemer on Friday night inיום זה לישראל-לנפש מצרה תסיר אנחה; for a troubled soul, it removes moaning.

The מתוק מדבש[[19]](#footnote-20) says that ‘one needs to accept Shabbos with happiness and delight in it. Included in delighting in Shabbos is to distance oneself from sadness. With our eyes, we saw many people that a certain instance of pain happened on Erev Shabbosand through accepting Shabbos with happiness and diverting fromthe pain, the situation reversed from יגון לשמחה מאפילה לאורה; darkness to light.’

The story is told of the [[20]](#footnote-21)Levush’s (1535-1612) only son that was found murdered near Horodna, where the Levush was Rav. When the mayor arrived he ordered that the body be kept in a nearby inn until it was ready for burial. The body was then placed in a room and then locked. Although the Levush heard the tragic news just priorto Shabbos, he resolved that he would make every effort to insure that the spirit of Shabbos would not be compromised by his personal misery. In order to escape his intense grief, he began composing the Friday night Zemer of מה יפית. He became so engrossed in expressing the lofty ideas and emotions of the song that he calmed himself. In heaven, this made a profound impact. As the Levush composed the final stanza חי זקף; o living God raise up, it was decided that his deceased son should be raised up and brought back to life. That Friday night his son awoke and attempted to leave the hotel room but found the door locked. He then climbed out of the window and arrived home at the conclusion of Shabbos just as his father was removing his shoes to commence the mourning period for his son. Upon seeing his beloved son he was overwhelmed with joy. He assumed that the account he was told of his son’s death was a fabrication until his son informed him that it was all true. He had died and because of the merit of the great Zemer, he was revived. This story spread to even the non-Jews of the city. The non-Jews began referring to the Jews living there as “the Jews, singers of מה יפית.”[[21]](#footnote-22)

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Learning on Tisha Bav?

On Tisha Bav, the Halacha[[22]](#footnote-23) states it is forbidden to learn Torahaside from some exceptions such as Midrash Eicha, Iyov and the like.[[23]](#footnote-24)The שדי חמד[[24]](#footnote-25) says that although a mourner is forbidden to learn Torah, it is permitted to learn ספרי יראה as well as Siferei Mussar that awaken the heart of a person to do Teshuva.

The question arises though, is one exempt from the obligation to learn altogether on Tisha Bav including that which is permitted on this day or is it an obligation to learn that which one is allowed to on Tisha Bav?

R’ Shlomo Zalman Aurbach brings from the Ritva two opinions on this matter.[[25]](#footnote-26) The opinion of the Aruch Linair is that one is obligated in the Mitzva of Talmud Torah and this can be fulfilled in that which is permitted to learn on Tisha Bav. Likewise, the שדי חמד[[26]](#footnote-27) as well as שו"ת דברי יציב[[27]](#footnote-28) and R’ Eliyashuv[[28]](#footnote-29) say there is an obligation of learning on Tisha Bav.

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1. Michtav Mieliyahu, volume 2, p 21. See Sota 14a, Tosafos מפני as well as Breishis 37:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. This is the idea of a birthday. The Korbon Haeida (1707-1762), who was a Rav in Berlin, writes in his commentary to Yerushalmi (Rosh Hashana 3:8, s.v. היה) that one usually doesn’t get harmed on his birthday since his Mazel is with him and protects him on this day. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. See Taanis 26. This is in line with the dictum מגלגלין חובה ע"י חייב...זכאי; harm is imparted through one who is guilty and benefit through one who is meritorious (Sanhedrin8a). Similarly, we sayויציל נפשותינו מן **השעות הרעות** (Shacharis at Krias Hatorah). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Sanhedrin 104b. Both בתי מקדש were destroyed on this day. In 1492, during the Spanish Inquisition, the deadline for the Jews to leave the country or face death was on תשעה באב.In recent history,World War l was declared onthis day. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Esther 3:15. When אדם sinned, Hashem said איכה (pronounced Ayeka); where are you (Breishis 3:9)- an expression ofconfusion. This is the same word as איכה (מגילת איכה) which is a day of confusion. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Shemos 2:2. Zohar 2, 12a [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Tangentially, see the Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim, 1:168) where he permits a wedding on the night of the 17th of Tamuz. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. He was a Rav and Av Beis Din in Prague. The noted author of the Chaye Adam was among his students. The Noda Biyehuda passed away in the year 1793. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. The story is told of an argument that ensued between the president of a shul and the Rav ifthe Tefila ofאב הרחמיםshould be recited on a particular Shabbos in the month of Av. TheRav ruled it should be said. This led to the dismissal of the Rav soon after Shabbos. In the meantime, a Rav in a neighboring area died and they were now searching for a Rav. They hired this Rav who was recently fired. This new job had 5 times the number of congregantsthan the previous shul in addition to that it was 3 times the salary. In a speech he gave atthe new shul, the president from his previous position was there.Disgusted, the president, after the speech, asked the Rav disrespectfully how he got the job. His reply: theאב הרחמים; our merciful father, Hashem! Sometimes we think an event may be bad when in essence Hashem is looking out for us. This is what is meant in מודים in על חיינו המסורים בידךas He knows what is best. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. This is why we eat an egg at the night of the Seder as an egg is a mourners food, which is for Tisha Bav. We eat this on Pesach, the day of redemption. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Orach Chaim, 428. Tangentially, this is a deeper meaning in על מצות (פסח) ומרורים (תשעה באב) יאכלוהו.See EichaRabba 3:5 which connectsTisha Bav and Pesach. The Pasuk saysמחבל בני יהודה נחלת בני שמעון; the heritage of the children of Shimon was from the portion of the children of Yehuda (Yehoshua 19:9). A similar connection is shown between Shimon and Yehuda in the Bracha of Yehuda where it says **שמע**ה' קול יהודה(Devarim 33:7) as שמע refers to שמעון (see Rashi there). Shimon corresponds to the month of Av whereas Yehuda to Nissan. This alludes to that Galus (Av) is rooted in Geula (Nissan, the month that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim). Indeed, Nissan is called חדש האביב(Shemos 13:4) which is a contraction of אב יב which is the name of this month- אב. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Rus 1:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Indeed, the initials of איכה form the phrase **א**ני **י**ודע **כ**ל **ה**נסתרות; I know all that which seems hidden. Thus there is no need to ever doubt Hashem although an occurrence may seem bad. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Brachos 54a. Devarim 6:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Melachim 1, 8:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Rus 2:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Beitza 16a [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Toras Avos, Shabbos, 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Taamai Minhagim, pg 151 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. The following story of the Levush is brought in a sefer from the Chofetz Chaim (Machane Yisrael, chapter 19). While in his youth, the Levush once found himself trapped in the home of a woman who tried to seduce him. His only escape route was through a chute that was used to empty the house’s sewage system. Without hesitation he escaped through there, ruining the clothes he was wearing. Following this, it was decided in heaven that as a reward he would become the author of 10 Sefarim each known as the Levush. Indeed, לבוש; Levush means garment alluding to his great deed in fleeing from sin. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Mekadshai Shevii, p 307 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Orach Chaim 554 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Regarding rinsing out one’s mouth on Tisha Bav, the Mishna Brura (567:11) writes that where one has a צער גדול; great pain because of it, it is permitted to rinse with water. See the Minchas Yitzchok, 4:109 concerning one who has a צער גדול from bad breath.As regards to an איסטניס; sensitive, delicate nature-the Mishna Brura (554:22) permits him to wash his face on Tisha Bav with water. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Siman 384. See the Meiri in Moed Katan 21a. The Biur Halacha (553 s.v. ולכן) writes that if I wasn’t scared of my colleagues, I would think that even on Tisha Bav itself we can be lenient and learn…. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Halichos Shlomo, Bein Hamitzarim, 15:12. Ritva, Moed Katan 15a, s.v. אבל. See Piskei Teshuvos 554:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Asifas Dinim, Bein Hamitzarim 2:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. 2:240 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Kara Alai Moed 8:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)