

MANIFESTATIONS OF MOURNING

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

The Fast of the 17th of Tamuz, 5758, is observed on July 12, 1998. (Because the 17th of Tamuz falls out on Saturday, July 11, 1998, and fasting is generally prohibited on Shabbos, the fast is observed on the next day, Sunday.) This fast, which commemorates the beginning of the destruction of the Temple, begins the three weeks of mourning over the Temple and our exile. These three weeks end with the Fast on the 9th of Av, observed on August 2, 1998. (See [1:27](#), [1:28](#), [1:30](#), [1:31](#) for more information on these fasts.)

The *Rambam* (Maimonides), in his *Mishneh Torah*, writes (Z'manim, Hilchos Ta'anios 5:16-17):

One who sees the cities of Judea in ruins should say (Isaiah 64:9) "Your holy cities are a wilderness . . . and tear his garment. One who sees Jerusalem in ruins should say (ibid.) "Zion is a wilderness . . ." and tear his garment. One who sees the Temple in ruins should say (Isaiah 64:10) "Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised you, has been burned with fire; and all our pleasant things lay in ruins," and tear his garment. From what point is he obligated to tear his garment? From where it first becomes visible, and when one reaches the site of the Temple, one makes another tear. All these tears should be done by hand, standing, tearing each garment on him until he reveals his heart, and the tears can never be sewn up."

These laws concerning the rending of one's garments upon seeing the ruins of Jerusalem and the Temple, according to Maimonides, mirror the laws concerning the rending of garments upon a person's loss of a parent. A person is obligated to mourn upon the death of their mother, father, sister, brother, spouse, son or daughter. However, the degree and extent of the mourning varies from relative to relative. When a person suffers the loss of one of these relatives, he or she should rend their garment. For most relatives, the tear need be only a few inches; we rip only the outermost garment; the ripping can be done with the assistance of an instrument; the ripping can be done in private; and we can sew the garment up after 30 days. However, by the loss of a parent, the laws are stricter. The tear must be to the point where we reveal the heart; we tear all garments, not merely the outermost; the tearing must be done by hand; the tearing must occur in public; and we can never sew up the garment.

Rabbi Mordechai Berkowitz, in his work *Nof Mordechai*, writes that according to Maimonides, a strong correlation evidently exists between the tearing done upon viewing the sites of destruction and that tearing done upon the death of one's parents. Maimonides apparently feels that the greater and stricter levels of tearing need be performed upon viewing the sites of destruction.

What is it about the destruction that makes it comparable to the loss of a parent as opposed to the loss of one of the other relatives for which one must rend his garments?

The Talmud (Moed Katan 26b) discusses scenarios when a person encounters the news of the death of more than one relative, and how one should rend their garments in such a situation. The Talmud relates:

"Rabi Yehudah ben Basaira says: For all [near of kin he makes] one rent; for his father and/or mother [he makes] another rent: because a rent made for one's father or mother is not to be added to. What is the reason [for this differentiation]? Said Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak, it is because there is no addition [of a rent] in their case."

Maimonides understands this passage to mean that if a person ripped their garment in mourning for a relative and then needs to rip in mourning of a parent, one cannot merely extend the first tear. Why is this true? Because the death of a parent warrants its own tearing; there is no addition of a rent in their case.

Maimonides uses this idea when discussing rending one's garments upon seeing the sites of destruction. If a person first sees the destruction of the Temple and rends his garments, and then sees the destruction of Jerusalem, one may add onto the initial rip. However, if one viewed Jerusalem first and ripped his garments and then saw the Temple, one must make a new rip. Seeing the destruction of the Temple warrants its own tearing; there is no addition of a rent in this case.

Rabbi Berkowitz suggests that the language of *"there is no addition in their case"* has a deeper meaning. What makes the tearing for parents different? There is no addition in their case! One can only have one mother and one father. It is possible for a person to have more than one sibling, child, or spouse. However, the mother and father that created a child are the only mother and father that this child will ever have. The bond between parent and child is distinct from other relationships. Their role in the life of their child is unique and is unlike the connection the child will have with any other relative. There is no addition. One can only have one mother and one father. Because of this unique characteristic of a parent, a child is required to add a degree of mourning upon the loss of a mother or father.

To this day, Jerusalem carries with it great significance and meaning to the Jewish people. The Temple was the holiest site in the holiest city in the world. G-d chose the site of the Temple. It was hallowed before King Solomon ever built the physical structure of the Temple. It remains the holiest place in the world. It is the one place where the entire nation of Israel flocked to on the holidays. Jerusalem has been in the heart and souls of Jews since the times of the forefathers. There is no addition - there is only one Jerusalem, and there is only one place where the Temple can be situated. Because we have lost Jerusalem and the Temple, we have to mourn in a way that illustrates the unique relationship we had and the immense void that has been created. Therefore - *"because there is no addition"* - the mourning for a parent and the mourning for the Temple and

Jerusalem mirror each other.