

OUR CONSOLATION

by Rabbi Label Lam

We sing on Friday evening the following poetic words, "Lovers of Hashem, those who long for the building of The Temple, delight and rejoice on the Holy Shabbos, like one who has received an endless inheritance..."

What does longing for the rebuilding of The Temple to do with the depth of pleasure we experience on Shabbos? The story is told about a sole survivor of a shipwreck who washed up on a desert island. After having taken care of his most basic needs of food, clothing and shelter he began to forage soon after to satisfy the next level of lacking, the need for human interaction.

Looking down from a mountain view he espied what seemed to be signs of civilization. His hopes were confirmed when he stumbled upon a fully developed housing and commercial district. People, however were not to be found as he wandered from store, to store, to home calling out unsuccessfully for a human response.

After six full days, in a moment of lapse, he suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder and noticed the streets bustling with people. The stranger invited him to come to his house for Shabbos. Nobody dare pause to answer his inquiries about where they had been because they all claimed to be too busy "getting ready for Shabbos." On Shabbos they would not speak about weekday matters.

He decided to wait till after Shabbos and meanwhile enjoy the high-spirited prayer services, divine cuisine, deeply resonant words of Torah, and angelic singing that accompanied the Shabbos there. After Shabbos, with just the light of the flickering havdallah (traditional observance marking the end of Shabbos) candle flashing in the eyes of all, the final blessing was recited and the candle neatly plunged into the awaiting dish of wine. Immediately the man began to ask but found to his surprise that he was alone again.

The next week after six days the same scene transpired. Nobody uttered a word about the weekday activity and where all had been. Shabbos, another delicious Shabbos passed and after havdallah he was plunged into darkness and isolation again. Enlightened by two previous experiences he waited till next week and at the moment when the great dancing light of havdallah was about to be extinguished he quickly grabbed the Rabbi's hand and refused to yield until his curiosity was satisfied. Where does everyone go? Seeing that he meant business the Rabbi explained, "This town has been here for hundreds of years as a port city even during the times of the Temple. Our greatest joy was the three times of the year when special emissaries were chosen and launched with great

ceremony and laden with gifts to represent the community in Jerusalem at The Holy Temple. Upon their return we would live from holiday to holiday on the inspiring stories of open miracles and the tangible holiness present at those splendid events.

"One time we were awaiting the arrival of our messengers after the holiday. We all stood at the beach at the appointed time. The whole day went by and at the very end when the sun was setting the band started to play as our ship appeared on the horizon. As it moored closer we began to sense something was amiss. The lone figure on the boat sat with his head bowed in silence.

"We gathered around him riddling him with questions till we grew silent and he spoke unspeakable words. He whispered in barely audible tones this impossible uttering, 'The Temple was destroyed!' We were all so shocked and hurt by the awful news that our hearts burst with grief and we died a simultaneous death because of our loss. In the heaven there was a great stir because we had all arrived before our time and yet we had left the world. A compromise was offered that since we died because of our love for The Temple we were sent back to live out our appointed days on earth, only on Shabbos." That is how the legend goes!

We once went to visit a blind woman in Jerusalem who was able to tell us volumes of accurate incites about our children just from feeling their faces. We were amazed. When we left one of our little boys said, 'That lady can't see with her eyes but she can see with her heart.'

When a person loses their ability to see, we find often, that other senses are more heightened and that sensitivity, although not a complete compensation, allows the person to function till the power of sight is restored. Similarly, without The Temple, The Almighty's Place, where His presence could be visibly perceived, we are like blind in the world. However, if one loves profoundly and wants truly to behold The Almighty's presence, then Shabbos, His time, takes on a richer flavor of joy, and in the meantime that is our consolation.

Good Shabbos!

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