

ABOUT THIS WE CRY!

by Rabbi Label Lam

All who eat and drink on the 9th of Av will not see the rejoicing of Jerusalem and all who mourn for Jerusalem will merit to see her joy... (Shulchan Aruch- Orach Chaim 554:25)

All who eat and drink on the 9th of Av: It is enough for the house of our G-d to be pained about its destruction at least one day in the year! (Mishne Berurah)

An ominously difficult day looms larger and larger as it approaches. The 9th of Av is admittedly not an easy day to face and endure. It's hard not to eat for the duration of a long summer day. We have no music to distract and console our spirits. We are to sit alone on the floor for at least part of the day and review the tragic trail of our history. It's not an easy time. Yet, it is critical to observe. The actions of the laws will tend to shape our mood and may thereby promote a real tear or two, and that would be a huge accomplishment.

Why is it good to cry on the 9th of Av?

I heard from Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zl. on Tisha B'Av many years ago the following powerful idea. He said that when one attends a simcha, a joyous occasion, a wedding for example, it's not easy to distinguish between the close family members and the guests. Everyone is dressed in their best. In the circle of dancing all have big smiles. The food is abundant. The drinks are flowing and it is neig impossible to sort out the ones most close and those more peripheral to the joy of the day!

However at a funeral it is immediately clear and evident who the essential mourners are. Many respectful participants will sit and listen to eulogies but with dry eyes. Others are sobbing and at times uncontrollably. We can be sure that these are the close ones.

Therefore on the 9th of Av a Jew has a chance to move closer to heart of his people. Not only to demonstrate sympathy, that's nice too, but to empathize- showing that he feels it too. The more one identifies with the goals of the Jewish Nation the more there is to feel. The more isolated and insular the posture the more one maintains a cool and distant attitude. So it is, the less one cares the less one shares even in the happy events. Tisha B' Av like Pesach is a critical day for each of us to find the placements of our hearts.

What exactly are we mourning about on Tisha B'Av? Is it that we have suffered so much in exile! That's part of it. Is that the real pain though? At a funeral, are the ones who are wailing absorbed in thoughts of their own discomfort or are they rather busy in the mind identifying with the pain of the

departed and measuring the enormity and magnitude of the loss!?

On Tisha B'Av we are not sitting there thinking about our stomachs that are grumbling or even that we find ourselves again under siege. The Chofetz Chaim spells out the real motive of the day as quoted above, "It is enough for the house of our G-d to be pained about its destruction at least one day a year." Contemplating that thought alone is enough to take us beyond our personal discomforts to rather stare at the enormous source of pain and to realize that the greatest loss is not ours alone. Every king and dictator has a palace or capital building that crowns his authority. It's hard to find a sports team that doesn't have a stadium where its powers are on display. Where is G-d Almighty's house? Not only we are in exile and under siege but the whole notion of HASHEM Echod is abused and mocked and misrepresented on a daily basis. It is about this we mourn and it is about this we cry! Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.