

A SACRED DATE

by Rabbi Label Lam

The entire community raised their voices and shouted, and the people wept on that night. (Bamidbar 14:1)

the people wept on that night: From that moment the destruction of the Temple was decreed, since it was the night of Tisha' B'Av. The Holy One Blessed is He said they are crying a cry for nothing, so I will fix for them a crying for generations. (Mosef Rashi)

What's so terrible about crying a cry for nothing? It sounds a lot like the father or teacher that says to the child, "You want to complain?! I'll give you something to complain about!" To the untutored ear it seems a vengeful and petty style of responding. It must be much more than that since we have been mopping up the fallout of those baseless tears for way too long now.

The first thing to appreciate is that there are no purely punitive punishments. The consequences of life must have a rehabilitative component. There-in is the promise of a cure. How does that apply here in the case of the wasteful cry that now lingers for generations?

I remember being engaged in a lively discussion more than once about why Holocaust Day is not so honored by the strictly observant community. It is certainly not out of disrespect for those who perished at the cruel hands of the Nazis during the 2nd World War. No, rather it is out of an appreciation of the wisdom of the sages. They understood that the primary cause for later tragedies can all be traced to the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent experience of exile. Now we discover that Tisha B'Av hearkens back to a foolish investment of emotions that not only put the Children of Israel on a 40 year detour but set the template for all future problems. Tisha B'Av remains the focal point of national mourning for an important reason. Why?

There was a gentleman who was feeling overwhelmed by his mounting worries. He sought out a wise man who gave him a simple and practical piece of advice that helped him with the carrying of his burden without entirely removing. The wise man told him to set aside ten minutes in the day, every day, and during that time he should worry away, but afterwards he should not indulge himself at all in the futile exercise of worry for the rest of the day.

The positive result came about because his concerns were no longer spilling out of that appointed time slot and bleeding into the whole day rendering him dysfunctional. Once he was done with his worries, he was done, till the next time. He was no longer the slave of a random attack of worry. Like

other aspects of life he pigeonholed it and dealt with it head on at the right time.

So too, on Tisha B'Av we are all expected to immerse ourselves in sadness, but that gloomy mood is only for one day. After that time we can go back to cheerful and productive life. The Temple would be destroyed the Torah anticipated, "because you did not serve HASHEM your G-d with joy and a good heart!" Tisha B'Av helps us to manage our emotions so we should not be overly burdened by sadness.

Save that negativity for Tisha B'Av! Don't cry for nothing now! Cry for the Beis HaMikdash! Whenever an unhappy thought invade our minds, it needs to be addressed and redirected, but at a pre-appointed- appropriate time. By soaking in sadness for one day we can be joyous and appreciative a whole year. There is a huge benefit for us to save and savor our tears and all of our emotions for a **sacred date**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.