

HOPE TO BE FOUND

by Rabbi Label Lam

All who eat and drink on Tisha B'Av will not witness the joy of Jerusalem, and all who mourn on Tisha B'Av will merit and witness its rejoicing. (Shulchan Aruch 554:25)

All who eat and drink: ... It is worth the while for the sake of the house of our G-d to experience distress about its destruction at least one day in the year! (Mishne Berurah)

On Tisha B'Av, while we are all sitting on the floor and fasting, what is it that we should be thinking about? Besides looking at the clock and calculating the time remaining until the fast is over, what should we be thinking about? Two things come to my mind. Both happened this week. A young man, a successful businessman, a seeker texted me a question at the onset of the nine days. Here is the texting dialogue:

Joe: "Hi Rabbi Lam Shavua tov! Two quick questions, if you happen to have a minute - 1) When we don't eat meat during the nine days, what mitzvas are we abiding by? Keeping a vow is one I would assume? 2) For those of us who are baal teshuvahs, how do we know if our ancestors are part of the initial vow? I'm not dodging the custom. I want to make sure I keep it with the proper mindset (is that called kavana?) Thank you very much!

Rabbi Label Lam: Hi Joe. I'm not sure it has anything to do with an oath. It has more to do with identifying with a state of national mourning.

Joe: Thank you. What mitzvah should we concentrate on fulfilling then? Love your neighbor?

Rabbi Label Lam: Loving your neighbor and loving HASHEM. Imagine that somebody and his whole family were thrown out of the house and the father and all the children were scattered into exile. That child would be longing for his brothers and identifying with the pain and embarrassment of his father that some gangster took over his house. He will be longing and waiting for the day when the entire family can get back home together.

Joe: Ok got it. Thanks!!

And so says the Talmud in Tractate Brochos 3A: *"My son, what sound did you hear in this ruin? I replied: I heard a Divine voice, cooing like a dove, and saying: Woe to the children, on account of whose sins I destroyed My house and burnt My temple and exiled them among the nations of the world! And he said to me: By your life and by your head! Not in this moment alone does it so exclaim, but three times each day does it exclaim thus!*

And more than that, whenever Israel goes into the synagogues and halls of study and respond: 'May His

great name be blessed!' the Holy One, blessed be He, shakes His head and says: Happy is the king who is praised so in this house! Woe to the father who had to banish his children, and woe to the children who had to be banished from the table of their father!

One fine evening this week something glimmering on the carpet caught my eye. I reached down, thinking it might be a sliver of glass on the bedroom floor. It was quite small, like the head of pin, lost on my finger tip. Upon further examination I came to realize that it was a diamond, perfectly cut, clear, and glimmering with depth and splendor.

My wife later affirmed my discovery and she examined the side stones on her own ring but none were missing. We have only now to find the rightful setting for this tiny diamond.

I later realized what a G-d like experience I was treated to. Here was this precious and petite item which ought to be lost in the expansiveness of the carpet but had somehow distinguishing itself with a special shine as a sign.

So too, we must imagine that HASHEM peers through the vast cosmos. His attention is caught by the intense light of a soulful Jew or a group of such Children of Israel. They are sitting low and mournfully longing to be restored to their rightful setting. We scattered diamonds, feel lost for now, can **hope to be found**.