

"WE ARE HERE -ENTIRELY!"

by Rabbi Label Lam

(Aicha) O how has the city that was once so populous remained lonely! She has become like a widow! She that was great among the nations, a princess among the provinces, has become tributary. (Eicha 1:1)

And HASHEM Elochim called to man, and He said to him, (Ayecha) "Where are you?" (Breishis 3:9)

It's the oldest and most persistent question known to mankind. It was asked by not less than the Almighty Himself of Adam the first man when he removed himself from the closeness of his original position. "Ayecha" – "Where are you?" The Midrash connects this question to another question asked of the Jewish People by the Prophet Yirmiah in the Megilla we read on Tisha B'Av. It's the very same letters with a variation in pronunciation. "Aicha" – "How?" How did it happen that a once glorious city of Jerusalem has fallen to such a lowly state? Maybe the answer to one question can help provide the cure for the second situation.

Shall we assume that HASHEM does know where Adam is that he must inquire, "Where are you?" My GPS knows exactly where I am all the time. Of course the Almighty knows where Adam is geographically. He also knows where he is spiritually as well.

Why ask the question you already know the answer to? Hmmmm!? It is useful for Adam to ask himself and discover the answer to the question, "Where are you?" It doesn't seem like an easy question to give an answer to! Adam fumbles and excuses and blames. That's the natural reaction. What is the appropriate answer?

The Baal Shem Tov says, "Wherever a person's thoughts are that is where they are entirely!"

If a person is thinking about standing by the Western Wall then that is there they are entirely. In spite of the fact that their feet are planted in Times Square. A person can be at the Western Wall physically and yet get distracted by an image on their phone and then suddenly be transported to Times Square, entirely.

Wow! Depending upon a thought a person can be in New Square or Times Square, The Western Wall or Walmart! Thoughts are a big responsibility. No wonder King Solomon cautioned in Mishlei, "From all the things you watch, protect your mind, because from it founts life!"

Now we have the key, the beginning of an answer to that question that persists in its asking, "Where are you?" When Avraham Avinu was called he gave the optimal, the ultimate response, "Hineini"-

"Here I am"- I am ready to serve! He was there! What's our answer?

A fellow came to a doctor with an unusual complaint. "Doc, every time I take one step forward I take two steps backward." The doctor contemplate the situation for a moment and responded to the patient, "I hear how that is a serious situation, but I have one question, "How did you get here?" The patient responded, "Not so simple. I have been trying to get here for years, so I finally gave up and went home!"

On Tisha B'Av we refocus our attention on what we once had, not for nostalgia-sake. We apply our thoughts on the Holy Temple because by doing so we are there, entirely. By going back to our home we find ourselves by the Doctor and therein the cure can be found. Then we can answer that question, "Where are you?" with the best answer, "Hineini", **"We are here -entirely!"**