

FIX THE WORLD

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

Tisha B'Av, the Ninth of Av, is the day of Mourning for the Temples which were destroyed.

Why do we mourn, so many years later? Would it not make more sense to put the past behind us, and to "work for a brighter tomorrow" instead?

To understand the purpose of mourning on Tisha B'Av, we need to understand the difference between a feeling that one is missing something, lacking, versus a feeling of hopelessness.

We are not simply crying over a building which was destroyed nearly 2000 years ago, crying over burned stones, or even over the lost connection to G-d which it gave us. Like the proverbial "crying over spilled milk," this would be of little value.

Instead, we express our sorrow that we still live in that era, that we've not yet deserved to see the Temple rebuilt. We know that it can happen and that it will happen, and we express our pain that we have not seen it happen already.

Our Sages say that we only forget someone, and feel relief from the pain of mourning, after they die. Yaakov continued to mourn his son Yosef, Joseph, for a full 22 years -- because Yosef was not dead. If we still express the pain, if we still express the sorrow over what we are missing, then our connection to G-d is not dead. It is still alive! We miss it, we cannot feel it or see it, but we know we can have it back -- if only we try harder. They also say: every generation that does not merit to see the rebuilding, is as if it was destroyed in their days. We have not fixed the problems.

It is said that Napoleon once walked by a Jewish synagogue on Tisha B'Av, and he heard crying and wailing from the crowd within. He sent someone to inquire about the tragedy that had happened, and he was told that the Jews were crying over their Temple, which had been destroyed centuries earlier. He apparently said, "any people which can still mourn over something destroyed 1800 years ago, will see that building rebuilt in the future." He understood that this was not simply crying over something lost, but crying over something that had not yet returned.

Just as our actions caused the destruction, our actions can cause its rebuilding. We can "fix the world." Let us work together to reach the point where Tisha B'Av will no longer be a day of mourning, but a day of rejoicing in our rebuilt Temple, quickly and in our own time.