

SHABBOS HOSTING

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This Shabbos, which is Tisha B'Av (the ninth day of the month of Av), we begin the Sefer (book) of Devarim. (The fast day is therefore pushed to Sunday, the tenth of Av.) It is interesting to note the allusions to Tisha B'Av in this week's parsha.

"Aileh ha'devarim asher debare Moshe el kol Yisroel... [These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Yisroel...] [1:1]."

Moshe was chastising Bnei Yisroel for the many times that they hadn't faithfully followed Hashem. Figuring quite prominently on that list was the sin of the meraglim -- the spies.

"Let us send men before us and they will spy out the land [1:22]", Bnei Yisroel said to Moshe. The disparaging report of the spies was accepted and Bnei Yisroel cried that night. Hashem responded: *'They cried on this night a b'chayah shel chinam [an unwarranted cry], I will establish (this night) as a b'chayah l'doros [a time of crying for all generations]'*.

Rabi Yochanan taught: That night was Tisha B'Av [Sotah 35].

Rav Dessler writes that crying is a means of expressing internal pain. What was our b'chayah shel chinam [our unwarranted cry]? He explains that it was a cry that emanated from a lack of faith. As we stood by the border of our Holy Land we refused to enter. *"Why did Hashem bring us to this land to fall by the sword? [Bamidbar 14:3]"*, we demanded of Moshe. *"It was with Hashem's hatred for us that He took us out of Mitzraim to be given into the hands of the Emori to destroy us! [1:27]."* Although we felt that we weren't worthy of Hashem's miracles [S'forno 1:27] and our cry was, therefore, a cry of teshuva [repentance], that was sullied by our lack of faith. This b'chayah shel chinam, revealing a decay in our inner connection to Hashem, needed to be corrected through the establishment of a b'chayah l'doros [a crying for all generations].

When Moshe was commanded to build the Mishkan [Sanctuary], Hashem didn't say that He would dwell in it but rather that He would dwell in us. No matter what a person does, that nitzotz hakadosh -- that spark of pure G-dliness -- is never extinguished. However, our actions and inactions can build a 'wall' around that spark, causing it to be unable to illuminate us with its brilliance. Causing us to be detached from Hashem and all vestiges of spirituality and bringing us to the brink of a spiritual death. That is the state of personal churban [destruction].

When the nation as a whole pushes away that spark through a spiritual ignorance and a materialistic overinvolvement and indulgence, detaching itself from its connection to Hashem, we reach a state

of collective churban. This manifests itself in the destruction of Yerushalayim and the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash [the Temple].

That visible and obvious destruction is meant to reveal to us our hidden, internal, personal destruction. The distance from our connection and relationship to our Creator. The distance from the relationship for which we were created. That detachment should bring us to tears. Not a b'chayah shel chinam [an unwarranted cry] but a b'chayah shel emes [an honest and heartfelt cry].

The list of national tragedies which fell on Tisha B'Av is astounding. The destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash, the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash, the destruction of the city of Betar, the expulsion of Jews from Spain and the beginning of World War I all are part of this b'chayah l'doros [crying for all generations]. The 'coincidence' of these events falling on Tisha B'Av was meant to teach us that only the Hand of Hashem guides these national events.

Eichah. Lamentations. Aleph, yud, chaf, heh. **Eichah.** Moshe said: "*Eichah e'sah l'vadee [How can I bear alone (the difficulties of this nation)] [1:12]*". Yirmiyahu mourned: "*Eichah yashvah badad [How did this come about that she (Yerushalayim) is sitting alone] [Eichah 1:1]*".

We find those same four letters composing a different word in Breishis. After Adom Harishon had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge he was hiding in Gan Eden. Hashem asked him: **A'yechah** [Where are you]? Aleph, yud, chaf, heh -- **A'yechah**... Aleph, yud, chaf, heh -- **Eichah**...

If we ask ourselves: A'yechah? Where are we? What are we doing with our lives? Are we connecting to Hashem or are we distancing ourselves from Him? Are we fanning that spark or are we extinguishing it? If we are asking those questions then we don't need to come to a state of Eichah [Lamentation]. If we need Hashem to ask us A'yechah, then we're in need of an Eichah -- a b'chayah l'doros...

That is the goal of this b'chayah l'doros. As all events that we view as 'punishments', the objective is to cause a person to assess and mourn his personal state of destruction. Only that can lead to the ultimate redemption.

One particular disciple of Rav Simcha Bunim was a very bitter, critical individual. He had traveled to spend Shabbos with his Rebbe but only arrived after Shabbos was over. He explained that there had been so many unexpected delays along the way that he ultimately had to spend Shabbos elsewhere.

The Rebbe listened to his story and told him the following: "Shabbos is a very gracious host. When Rosh Chodesh [the new moon] comes on Shabbos, she graciously 'gives' the Maftir reading and the Mussaf prayer to Rosh Chodesh. When the joyous Yom Tovim [holidays] fall on Shabbos, she additionally 'gives' the guest the Torah reading itself. When Yom Kippur comes on Shabbos, offering its forgiveness, in addition to all of the above, Shabbos even sets aside her festive meals in honor of her guest.

"However, when Tisha B'Av bringing its sadness comes on Shabbos, she has a different attitude. Shabbos says: 'You must wait and come only after Shabbos!'.

"Perhaps," the Rebbe continued, "your not making it here was a message from Hashem. Unhappiness is not welcome until the joy of Shabbos is over. Change your ways and Shabbos will welcome you as well!"

May the unhappiness of this year's Tisha B'Av be pushed off, not just that one day until Sunday, but for all eternity, through the internal, spiritual rebuilding that will bring Moshiach tzidkenu, bimhairah b'yamainu (The Mashiach, Soon in our days), Amen!

Good Shabbos,

Yisroel Ciner

Copyright © 1998 by [Rabbi Yisroel Ciner](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

The author teaches at [Neveh Tzion](#) in Telzstone (near Yerushalayim).
