

NOTES ON THE "NINE DAYS"

by Dr. Nosson Chayim Leff

We will soon begin 'the " Nine Days' -- a period of national mourning. This somber period starts with the first day of the month of Av -- the day on which Aharon Hakohein was niftar (took leave of this world ; i.e., passed away). The mourning culminates on Tish'a Be'Av, the ninth day of the month. On that day, both the first and the second Beis HaMikdash were destroyed..

In trying to handle this period of national mourning, you may find the following ideas helpful. First, it is important to distinguish between Atzvus--depression --and Aveilus-- feeling bereft... The Seforim single out Atzvus -- a dark force of self-destruction which lurks deep within most of us--as a key weapon of the Sitra Achra. Aveilus, on the other hand, is a feeling of sadness because something dear to a person has been lost ..

What have we lost? The Beis HaMikdash, and the easier access to HaShem that the Mikdash afforded. More generally, we are mourning the fact that "the Shechina is in Golus". This phrase is shorthand for the many sources of grief from which we suffer because of the wide gap that has opened between HaShem and ourselves. . Sources of grief include:: the Hester Panim in which we live ; the ensuing Chilul HaShem; ; people who treat other people in ways incompatible with both being created Betzelem Elokim;; 'leaders' who do not lead ;; ' followers' who do not follow ;; Sin'as Chinam (likewise, well-merited Sin'a). The list is long ...

Clearly, we have much for which to mourn. But -- the Seforim tell us -- even during the Nine Days, our Torah and our Tefila--i.e., our Learning and our Davening-- should beBesimcha (with joy)...

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