

## Nourishment for the Neshama

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### Tuesday, August 09, 2011

#### Mourning the loss of the Temple - Tisha B'Av 5771

As I watched the DVD for the Tiferes Program (CCHF) for the month of Av, the tour of the temple and the photos and the discussion about how matters in the Temple were conducted made the Temple's existence very palpable. As I looked on, I felt as though I was in the palace of the King of the universe. For one split second, I had a sense of what it might have been like and I wondered about the joy that Hashem had in being in His Bais. Do we realize that Hashem allowed His Bais to be burned instead of destroying us, His people who imperfectly sinned?

The love that Hashem has for us is like the love for a child – would we not sacrifice any material thing, even our house, in order to save the life of our child? Hashem loves us so much.

And here we are, thousands of years later, and we have not repaired the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple. We didn't know then, and we know even less now.

Yet it is our responsibility as the Jewish people to find out what we do not know. We are the people who are entrusted to be Hashem's intimate people, to bring His light and attributes to the world. Yes, we bring intelligence and chesed and tzedakah – all important. But we need to go deeper into ourselves, we need to go into our hearts. We need to remove the casing on our hearts that causes a divide between what we want in common with all mankind – comfort, peace, material sustenance- and what we are instructed to want as Jews – humility, relationship with Hashem, and clarity of His Will so that we can build our eternity.

On this night when we cried upon hearing the report of the spies, Yehoshua and Caleb said it is alright – Hashem is with us, we will prevail. But we encased within our hearts the despairing report of the spies and now we continue to cry.

It is August 8, 2011, the evening of the 9<sup>h</sup> of Av. We are at mincha, reading Eicha while seated low or on the floor. Yet thanks to Hashem we will return to our air conditioned homes and even in our attempts to lessen our comforts, we will be living better than Kings lived for all of human history. And still, with everything we have, we have nothing at all, for we are stranded in the temporal and material world with no way to visually or auditorially experience the most urgent part of our existence – our relationship with Hashem. We are separated and the separation of hester panim has caused us to accept that what is in hiding will remain hidden, that perhaps we had just better do the best we can with our own hands and seichel, chas v'chalom.

The golus is showing us where that takes us. In McLean Virginia a 63 year old woman shoots her 71 year old psychiatrist and kills herself. In Jackson Mississippi, two white teenage boys seek a black person and beat him and then one of the teens takes a truck and runs his staggering body over killing him, boasting about it. In New York Levi Aron kills an innocent 8 year old boy who trusted the wrong stranger in asking for directions home. In Beer Sheva Rabbi Asher Dahan comes in supposedly to get advice from his rebbe, the Baba Elazar, kisses his hand and then stabs the Baba Elazar to death. A shooting of a black man in London triggers days of rioting and looting near the Jewish community of Golden Green. Palestinian TV teaches pre-schoolers to hate Jews because we wish to keep Yerushalayim, claiming that it has been Arab land for 2000 years before there was ever a Jew there. In Norway a terrorist kills 80 in Oslo. A polar bear attacks and kills people summer camping in that territory resulting in the polar bear being executed. U.S. government bonds are downgraded to AA+ and may be downgraded again due to uncontrolled debt. Hashem is trying to get our attention. What does He want?

Human intelligence is very limited. Hashem allows us to pursue our desires but what our feelings alone

can bring out is even more limited and worse, what we take for ourselves to satisfy the emotions we want to live in is destructive more often than not, and further, does not provide us with even a smidgeon of the good that Hashem would give to us if we chose to be connected to Him. Our bodies are nothing more than a vessel whose content must be connected to the Divine Will or else we are like an engine with no steering wheel.

It is incumbent upon us to recognize that the only steering wheel that will keep the human engine from running out of control is a steering wheel tightly built close to the aspect of the Divine Image within us and the Divine Will as stated in Torah. Human life has value. We have free will and the opportunity to bring out something higher than just the emotions of our hearts. When we had the temple, we could walk in and be certain that there is a part, a huge part, of us beyond our physicality, that Hashem loves us, and that we can live lives that are pleasing to the King by doing teshuva for our sins and keeping Torah and mitzvahs and shining light. The burning of the Temple and the Shechina going into hester panim was an amputation of such great proportion to our existence that we don't even have enough awareness to comprehend it.

And what about Hashem? Did Hashem love being in the Temple? Did He love having a way to be present in this world in a form where those who came could comprehend His Infinite and Omnipresent existence and involvement in our lives and our world? Do we fully understand that should we have the third temple, may it come today, that we would immediately regain an understanding of Hashem and experience the understanding of Torah on a level we cannot even imagine? Are we open to the possibility of comprehending that what was amputated can come back, that it is not permanently gone, but we have to yearn for it and beg Hashem to redeem us?

Dear Hashem, help us to feel Your pain in not having your Bais. Help us to comprehend how it is in our hands to cry out to you for this treasure that we want in the world. Help us to expel the yetzer hara from our hearts that tells us we are comfortable and everything is okay, for it is not okay. Send us a leader, the Moshiach, who will help us grow into the people that You long for us to be. Help us to listen to the messages of suffering that You are sending into the world so that we respond with tears and prayers for Your Love and presence to be known in the world.

Dear friends, Hashem is good. He is interested in bestowing good upon us, and everything He does is in order to bring us to be able to avail ourselves of the good He wishes to give to us. Let's not be blindsided by the technology, comfort and societal norms of self-actualizing. Instead let us actualize the Divine Image within us and build a relationship with Hashem based on the spiritual reality that we are souls attached at all times to Him temporarily in bodies so that we can enjoy the eternal reward that Hashem creates for us. Let us yearn dearly for His return to His Bais in Yerushalayim, and may our yearning include developing a close relationship with Him and choosing to actualize what He wants rather than the desires of our spiritually disconnected hearts.

May we be able to use our free will this Tisha B'Av to energize our emunah, to re-connect the power of our desires to the Source of the Power, and be happy within ourselves beyond any other happiness when we experience the meaning of having no separate existence from Hashem.