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Wake Up and Dream

The Kotzker Rebbe once said, “Cry on Tisha B’Av. And if you can’t bring yourself to cry, then cry over the fact that you can’t cry.”

That line always moved me.

Personally, I don’t struggle to cry. I cry watching children receive their first siddur. I cry at army swearing-in ceremonies, at weddings during the bedeken, and when I hear a new song brimming with pride for our land. I cry for our personal loss, and I cry for our national one. I cry on Yom HaZikaron and I cry on Yom HaAtzmaut. I cry when we sing מארי כהן on Yom Kippur, envisioning the Kohanim completing their sacred mission.

Emotion comes easily to me—tears of pain, tears of joy, tears of longing.

Call me a crybaby. I’m okay with that.

For these things, I weep — אלה אני בוכיה.

I cry for those who aren’t crying. Who aren’t shedding tears of longing for the life we could have. Who aren’t mourning what we once had and lost.

Is anyone else convinced that this upcoming fast of mourning will turn into a feast of

celebration (as told by the prophet Zachariah)? That this long, painful, and exhausting exile will end? That the distractions, illusions, and false comforts of materialism will fall away, and we will finally begin to live a life of clarity, inner peace, and deep connection to the Divine?

The prophet Yeshayahu promised: לא ישא גוי—nation shall not lift sword against nation. Peace will reign. And “מלאה הארץ דעה את ה’ כמים לים מכסים”—the world will be filled with the knowledge of God like water covers the sea. There will be healing. Redemption. Truth revealed. Hospitals transformed into birthing centers. Leaders filled with רוח אלוקים, a Godly spirit. Priests returning to sacred service. A world without grief. Without funerals. Without pain. A world of deep connection to the true Source, one of true joy, tranquility and Godliness.

It seems lofty—even fantastical. But it will be.

Sometimes I dream of the details. Are we preparing—physically and spiritually—for that day? What if, instead of sirens warning of rockets, we heard shofar blasts announcing salvation? What if the knock on the door wasn’t from soldiers delivering devastating news, but messengers inviting us to witness the crowning of Mashiach?

What if instead of rushing to a safe room, we ran to a mikvah, a place of cleansing and rebirth? What if pain gave way to extreme joy? What if all the suffering we’ve endured—both

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personal and national—would become so clear it's simply preparing us for this very moment?

Maybe, just maybe, if we allowed ourselves to dream boldly enough, we'd begin to truly mourn what we've lost—and work, full steam ahead, toward the life we're meant to regain.

על אלה אני בוכיה.

When I cry for my son Binyamin Hyd—when I ache to see his bright smile, to feel his strong embrace—I imagine him watching me from the higher realms. He knows the truth. He sees the bigger picture. He wants so badly to comfort me, to tell me it's all going to be glorious, that we'll be together again. But he can't. He's in Olam Haba, and I'm still down here.

That pain, I've come to realize, is perhaps a taste of Tza'ar HaShechinah—the sorrow of the Divine Presence. Hashem, *kiv'yachol*, longs to redeem us, to hold us, to wipe away our tears. But we are distant. He is hidden. The world we once had—a world of direct connection, of revealed glory in the Beit HaMikdash—is gone.

על אלה אני בוכיה.

On Yom HaZikaron, I saw fires rage through our beautiful land, turning lush forests into skeletons of ash. I was broken—not just by the physical damage, but by what it represented. Eretz Yisrael is how Hashem “speaks” to us. When it flourishes, we know He is smiling upon us. But when it burns, something deeper is being communicated.

And then, during the recent 12-Day War, we saw miracles. Buildings were struck—but mostly lives were spared. It was Hashem, perhaps, choosing to destroy structures, not souls.

Both are forms of *churban*. Sometimes Hashem destroys the physical—trees, homes, hospitals—but never His nation. He destroyed His home, a dwelling place for His Shechinah. But not His beloved children.

Now we're left to rebuild the connection. To find God in a world without the Beit

HaMikdash. To search through the thick clouds of exile, through the noise of a distracted world. We move through an atmosphere that dulls the soul—filled with conversations that shrink our vision rather than lift it.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

We can choose to be dreamers. We can surround ourselves with the voices of visionaries. We can dare to want more. Because if we dream it, if we yearn for it, we'll begin to act on it. And if we, as a nation, cry for closeness with Hashem—if we truly beg and plead for His return—He will not refuse us.

So ahead of this Tisha B'Av: Stop sleeping.

עורו ישנים משינתכם. Wake up from your slumber — Wake up, and dream.

Open your eyes and envision. Then we can truly mourn what we've lost—and beg for what can be.

Because that's the greatest longing of all:

Not just to cry over the past—

But to believe in the future.

May we be worthy to witness, with our own eyes:

עין בעין יראו בשוב ה' ציון.

With tearful hope,

Amen ■

The **Airleys** have built **Beit Binyamin**, a retreat center in Tzfat for those directly affected by the war. Soldiers, Zaka members, security forces, bereaved families and widows can come for respite, relaxation and rejuvenation. For more information and to donate, visit Beitbinyamin.org

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