



GEULAS YISRAEL

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN
RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

Three Circles of Mourning

There are several concentric circles of mourning on Tisha B'Av. At the center stands the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash. This is the most immediate and historical focus of the day. We mourn the loss of the Beit Hamikdash, our exile from the land promised to us by Hashem, and the collapse of Jewish sovereignty.

Tisha B'Av asks us to relive that infamous day. Various kinot transport us back to the two churbanot. The kinah *Eich Tenachem* describes Nevuzaradan's entry into the First Beit Hamikdash and recounts his massacre of tens of thousands in response to the murder of the navi Zechariah. Likewise, the kinah entitled *Az Bahaloch Yirmiyahu* portrays Yirmiyahu entering the Beit Hamikdash on the night of Tisha B'Av and lamenting its destruction.

Other kinot focus on the Roman destruction of the Second Beit Hamikdash. *Arzei*

HaLevanon memorializes the Ten Martyrs, while *Eleh Ezkerah* recounts the tragic fate of the son and daughter of Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol after they were taken captive by the Romans.

Our first circle of mourning on Tisha B'Av is the actual destruction of the two Batei Mikdash.

The second circle of mourning extends beyond the day of the Churban itself to the centuries of suffering that flowed directly from the destruction of the Mikdash. Two thousand years of galut were marked by hatred, persecution, expulsions, and massacre. Some of these tragedies became the subject of kinot, such as the devastation of the Rhineland communities during the Crusades in 1096. Since the Holocaust stands apart in both scale and horror, many communities have added kinot to commemorate that unprecedented catastrophe. Other tragedies, including the Spanish Inquisition and the Chmielnicki massacres, did not receive their own kinot, yet they are fully embraced within the mourning of Tisha B'Av. They are all chapters of the same long story that began with the destruction of the Mikdash and continued throughout the long night of exile.

There is a third and widest circle of mourning on Tisha B'Av. We mourn not only the Churban itself, nor only the centuries of Jewish suffering that followed. We mourn what happened to our world in the wake of Tisha B'Av.

The Beit Hamikdash was more than the national home of the Jewish people or the

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place in which Jews encountered Hashem. It was the place from which the Shechinah radiated to the entire world. When the Mikdash stood, Hashem's presence was more openly revealed, illuminating not only Jewish life but the moral and spiritual condition of humanity. With its destruction, that presence did not disappear, but it became concealed. The hester panim that followed reshaped not only Jewish history but the condition of the world itself.

Therefore, on Tisha B'Av we mourn not only a destroyed Mikdash or a long exile. We mourn a fractured world that no longer enjoys the same clarity, morality, and awareness of Hashem's presence. Many of the moral and spiritual struggles that define modern life can also be traced to that loss. To understand why the concealment of the Shechinah had such sweeping consequences, we must first understand what monotheism was always meant to accomplish.

TWO GOALS

The goals of monotheism are manifold. Its first goal is theological: to deepen belief in Hashem and strengthen awareness of His presence in the world. But monotheism also carries a profound moral mission. It seeks to embed Hashem's values and attributes within human society. Hashem is compassionate, just, and kind, and His will is inherently moral. As people live by those values, His presence is felt not only in prayer and ceremonies but in the daily conduct of human beings.

The Shechinah is revealed not only when people acknowledge Hashem, but when they emulate Him. Every act of compassion, honesty, justice, and responsibility brings His presence more deeply into the world. When humanity lives by those standards, the world

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becomes a place in which the Shechinah is more readily felt.

For centuries, these moral commitments formed the foundation of civilization. Marriage and family were regarded as sacred institutions, while morality itself was understood to rest upon enduring truths. It was commonly accepted that standards of right and wrong transcended the individual. These moral norms were rooted in a higher order established by Hashem rather than in human choice.

Over the past few centuries, with the rise of hyper-individualism, that shared moral framework has steadily weakened. Modern society has elevated personal freedom, liberty, and dignity. Increasingly, it has detached those ideals from any objective moral foundation. In an age of individualism, people increasingly claim not only the freedom to choose how to live but also the authority to define what is morally right and wrong. Objective moral truth has faded, and so has confidence in objective ethical standards.

The hester panim that followed the destruction of the Mikdash gradually weakened the foundation upon which those moral absolutes rested. The Churban ultimately led to a world in which, centuries later, morality itself is increasingly viewed as a matter of personal preference rather than shared truth.

THE LOSS OF TRUTH

The erosion extends beyond morality to how we view truth itself. We inhabit a world in which truth has become fragile. It is undermined by the technologies that increasingly shape our lives. Social media has made it far easier for falsehood to spread unchecked, while artificial intelligence can now fabricate images, videos, and voices that are nearly impossible to distinguish from reality. As these technologies continue to advance, discerning truth will become even more difficult.

Hashem is the ultimate source of truth, and every genuine pursuit of truth draws us closer to Him. When His presence is concealed, truth itself becomes untethered. A world detached from the Shechinah gradually loses confidence not only in what is right but in what is true.

Both the erosion of objective morality and the distortion of truth have also found expression in growing hostility toward the Jewish people and the Jewish state. The Jewish people bear witness to Hashem in this world. Societies that lose confidence in transcendent truth often become uncomfortable with those who continue to bear that witness.

Our return to Eretz Yisrael marks the gradual restoration of Hashem's presence to history and the gradual emergence of Malchut Shamayim. It is therefore no coincidence that Israel has become the focal point of so much moral inversion and falsehood.

IDEOLOGICAL CONFUSION

The concealment of the Shechinah after Tisha B'Av produced a second consequence. Our own generation struggles with growing ideological confusion and division. This too flows from the *hester panim* that followed the destruction of the Mikdash.

When Hashem's presence is more openly revealed, spiritual reality is clearer. Throughout much of Jewish history, profound debates flourished, yet they unfolded within a framework of shared spiritual truths. Greater revelation did not eliminate disagreement, but it established the boundaries within which disagreement could legitimately occur.

A world illuminated by the Shechinah and guided by *ru'ach hakodesh* possesses greater clarity and greater confidence. *Ru'ach hakodesh* does not erase free will or eliminate differences of opinion. It does, however, illuminate the path toward truth and disqualify ideas that lie beyond the boundaries of authentic Torah.

Our post-Tisha B'Av world is different. Without the same revelation of the Shechinah, competing ideologies multiply, each claiming to possess the truth. We no longer enjoy the same spiritual clarity that once guided our people. We continue searching for truth, but we do so in a world where the light that once illuminated humanity shines less brightly.

MOURNING OUR FRACTURED WORLD

As we approach yet another Tisha B'Av, let us remember to mourn in three concentric circles. First, we mourn the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash, our exile from Eretz Yisrael, and the loss of Jewish sovereignty. Second, we mourn the long night of Jewish history, centuries of persecution and suffering that flowed from the Churban and from which, thankfully, we are slowly beginning to emerge.

Finally, we mourn the world itself. We see the erosion of shared moral values, growing confusion between truth and falsehood, and a society that has become increasingly fractured. We should not be surprised that our

enemies exploit these fractures in their campaign against the Jewish people and the Jewish state. A world that has lost its moral and spiritual center becomes increasingly vulnerable to moral inversion and distorted truth.

We also mourn the ideological confusion within our own people. Bereft of the same revelation of the Shechinah, we struggle to preserve the shared spiritual clarity that once united us. We continue searching for truth, but we do so in a world in which competing ideologies have multiplied and certainty has become harder to attain.

When the Shechinah became concealed, the world lost more than the Beit Hamikdash. It lost much of the moral and spiritual clarity that flowed from Hashem's revealed presence. The fractures we experience today are not disconnected from that ancient loss.

We pray for the day when the Shechinah will once again rest openly in our world, restoring the moral and spiritual clarity that has been missing since the Churban. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War**, is available at: mtaraginbooks.com.

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