

I'm Supposed To Be On Vacation!

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It's often been said that we Jews live from one Yom Tov to another. That being said, I think that there isn't a time in the Jewish calendar as dreaded as the three weeks of mourning between the fast of the 17th of Tammuz and the fast of the 9th of Av.

Baruch HaShem, those of us who are privileged to study the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and especially the *Torah* of Rebbe Nachman know that every date on the Jewish calendar is both meaningful and essential for us to be good and happy Jews. On that note, let us explore one of Reb Noson's teachings to discover a new way to relate to these days of mourning. Perhaps we might even begin to look forward to them, and feel comforted looking back at them.

The weather is warm, the sky is blue, and everyone seems like they are relaxed and having a good time – so why should I have to mourn and cry? Wasn't it Rebbe Nachman who said, "It is a great mitzvah to be constantly happy"? Such a question is really based on two premises. One, that I am a successful person and everything in my life is great and wonderful. Two, that crying is a negative emotion, related to sadness, and is something that I try as hard as I can to avoid. Why cry when one can laugh and be jolly?

But is everything in my life truly perfect? When the long weekend is over and I have to go back to work or school, am I still daydreaming about the past few days? Even during my time off, was I truly able to relax and feel good about life, or was I constantly thinking about and worrying over things? No situation can ever be perfect because we lack the presence and the power of the Beit HaMikdash.

We are all in pain. Some of us are always in pain, while others feel it from time to time. If we think deeply about this, we will realize that the source of our pain lies in the fact that we don't understand why we must experience these difficult times.

Imagine that a wealthy old man approaches you on the street and asks you to help him carry some heavy items. He explains that he doesn't have anyone to inherit his small fortune, so, in return for your kindness, he will write you into his will. Would the items he asks you to carry still seem so heavy? If G-d would come down to each of us and explain exactly why, in His great kindness, it is so good and important for us to have to experience difficulties, we would happily agree to His plan.

The Beit HaMikdash allowed for a remarkable healing process. When it stood, the world was filled with the feeling that G-d was close to home. When we experienced difficulties, we were naturally inclined to turn to G-d and unify ourselves with His

Greatness in complete physical nullification. While in this state, our souls were completely attached to their Source and the Oneness of all purpose was revealed. Of course, we could not remain in this transcendent state forever, but we were able to draw back down a spiritual residue – new Torah insights that would give our pain and suffering new meaning and insight, a Torah that deals with the source of our pain. These lessons renewed us and breathed new life into our struggles and tribulations.

The Beit Hamikdash was destroyed over 2,000 years ago. What are we doing today? We are busy with life and trivial pleasures, and G-d feels so distant from us. How can we possibly come to a state of clarity in which we take the time and have the mindset to achieve that great Oneness with our Creator? It is precisely because of this great disconnect that our problems hurt so much; they feel so pointless.

So we cry. We cry because we have so many problems, many of which we created ourselves. We are in pain because we don't know how to connect them to their Source – G-d. We cry because we have become so busy and distant from G-d and because we have forgotten about Him. But something else happens when we cry. Crying makes us close our eyes to this world and look to our true purpose and the truth of this world. For a brief moment, we leave everything behind and become one with G-d. We begin to feel again that everything has purpose and we are filled with joy. Through this new joy, we are now able to perceive how the Torah is holding us by our hands and leading us to a meaningful life and to our ultimate purpose – closeness with G-d. This new perception generates new Torah insights and the understanding necessary for us to truly connect every aspect of our lives, especially the difficult ones, to G-d. This is the true consolation: *Nachamu, Nachamu Ami*.

Adapted from *Reb Noson's Likutey Halakhot -Ozta HaYirah: Bein Hameitzarim*