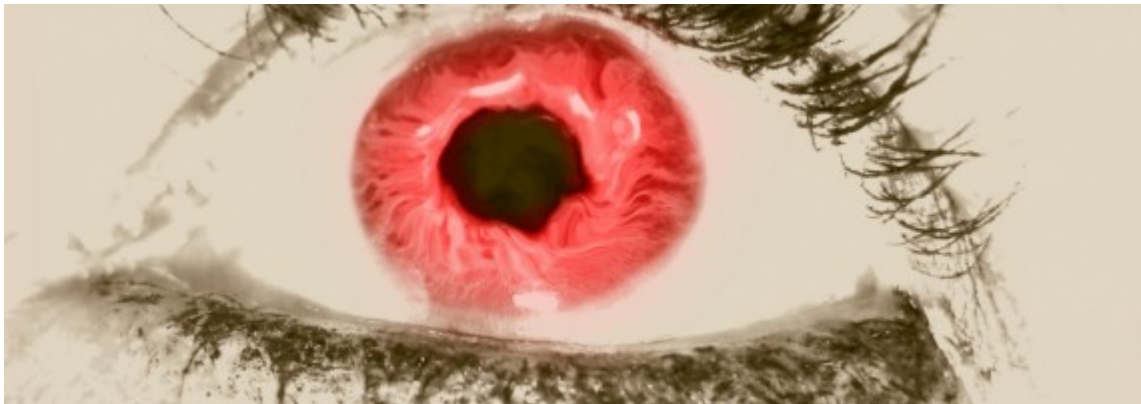


Why We Should Cry

written by Ozer Bergman

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“For these things do I weep, my eyes flow with tears. Any comforter who might revive my spirit is far from me. My children are forlorn, for the enemy has prevailed” (Lamentations 1:16).

Rebbe Nachman taught: The past is gone; our Holy Temple has burned down. Now, when God anticipates returning to us and rebuilding the Temple, it’s only right that we shouldn’t cause any delay. We should take care to rise at midnight to mourn the Temple’s destruction.

□Tisha B’Av, the Ninth of Av, is upon us and again many of us wonder: What are we crying about? One simple answer comes from this story:

A chassid came to Reb Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. “Rebbe, the Code of Jewish Law says that one should rise at midnight to lament the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple). What if one doesn’t feel that pain?” The Kotzker answered in his typical, laconic style: “Let him mourn his own destruction.”

The Kotzker’s immediate message is that one who doesn’t understand what the Beit HaMikdash means, and doesn’t feel its absence, needs to work on his own Jewish sensitivity. True, none of us has been to the Beit HaMikdash in this lifetime. So

what? Plenty of Jews who were born well after the Destruction did *learn to feel it*. Even if it was easier for them than for us to *learn to feel it*, we can also *learn to feel it*. It takes practice, and practice takes time. Here (in bold type) is part of an elegy written by Reb Yaakov Emden (1697-1776). A contemporary “translation” follows (in plain type).

Oy! The Shekhinah is in exile. My marriage is hell.

Oy! The Torah has been set afire. The depth of Torah wisdom is inaccessible to me.

Oy! Tzaddikim die and leave us. I don’t have a personal connection with a rabbi that I trust and respect.

Oy! God’s reputation and Torah are disgraced. The media and people insult God and Jews. I am often too weak and ashamed to live as Jewishly as I want.

Oy! Jewish enemies have too much power. The Land of Israel and its inhabitants are in danger. Anti-Semitism festers and lurks around the world.

Oy! Too many Jewish children don’t learn Torah. So many Jewish children never even learn that they’re Jewish, let alone *aleph-bet*. So many who go to yeshivah are mis-taught.

Oy! All Worlds of Creation are in pain. All levels of human existence, physical, emotional and spiritual, are out of whack. There’s poverty, disease, murder, war; emotional abuse, anxiety, lack of dignity; confusion, fear, purposelessness, etc.

Oy! The holy Patriarchs and holy Matriarchs suffer. Their investment of years and tears of suffering and humiliation, of physical and spiritual toil to form a nation dedicated to the Divine mission, is in constant jeopardy. Thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of their offspring—past *and* present—failed, or never had a chance, to contribute to that

mission.

Oy! The Mashiach is in pain. Mashiach is not just an incredibly gifted tzaddik/teacher with extraordinary talents and abilities. He is *us*, 600,000 souls contained in one human being. Our pain is his pain. Our mistakes (some call them “sins”) hurt us/him. They delay his arrival and make his job that much harder. (Sorry for laying on the guilt, but I’m as much at fault as you, maybe more.)

Oy! The Beit HaMikdash is destroyed. The lifeline between Heaven and Earth is not there. The ladder allowing us to climb closer to God has been kicked away and broken. The channels of bounty have been diverted, clogged or put out of service altogether. The “tree” in whose shade each piece of Creation and all of Creation can come to peace and harmony, true fulfillment and destiny, suffers sore neglect.

May we be privileged to witness Mashiach’s arrival, soon, swiftly, in our lifetime. Amen.

a gutn Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

–Based on *Likutey Moharan* II, 67