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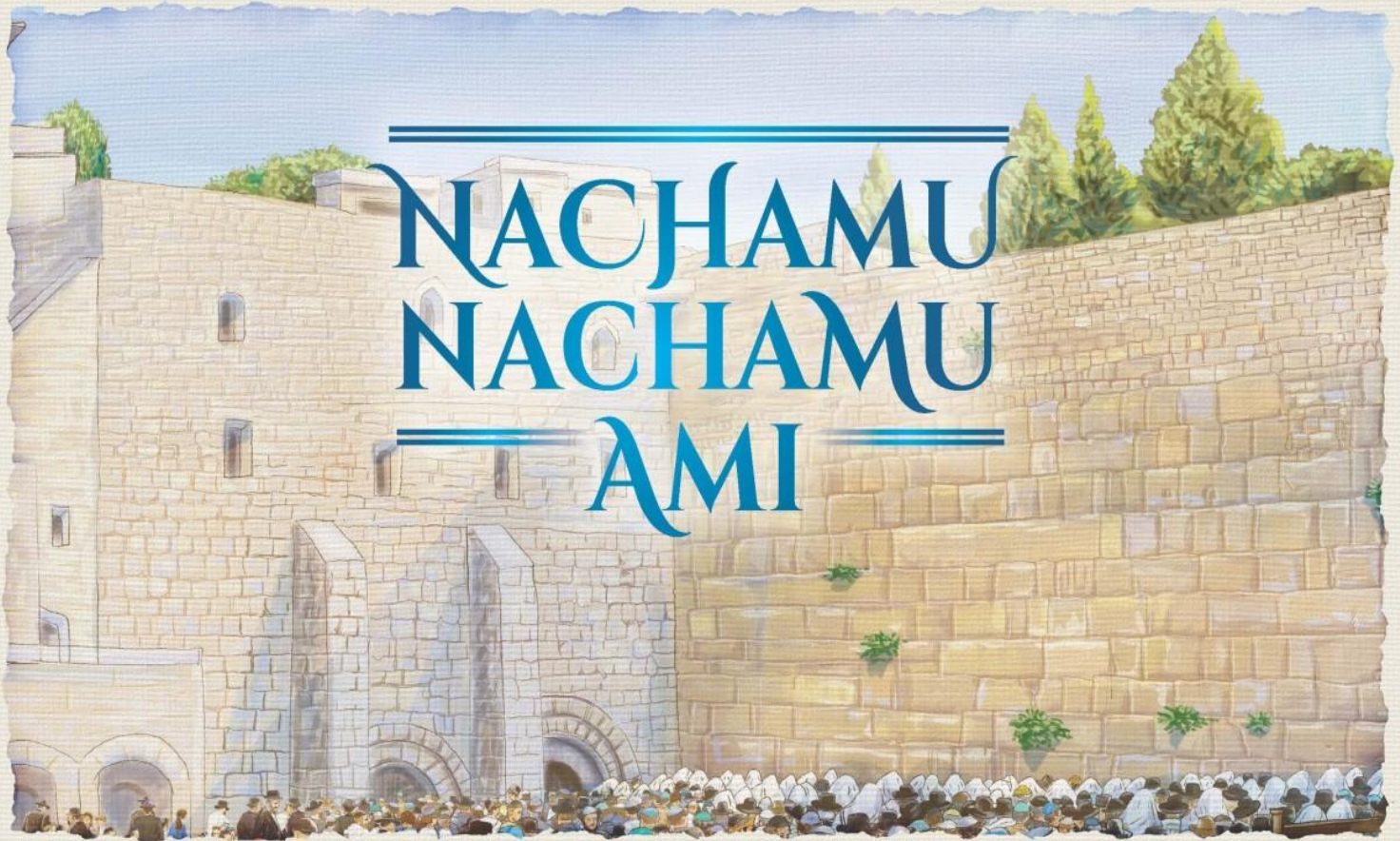
Torah sweets

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- Shabbos Nachamu Insights – Transitioning from Mourning to Consolation
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A time traveler once emerged from his machine, and the first person he encountered was an English language professor. “Can I ask you what month it is?” the traveler asked.

“May...” the professor replied curtly. “Fine,” the traveler shot back. “May I ask you what month it is?”

Two of the biggest mental health issues plaguing the world today are depression and anxiety. Although these issues often have clinical roots, there are also times when these feelings are self-imposed and fixable. Living in the past can make a person miserable because he is chained to his mistakes, whereas there may be debilitating worry for someone always living in the future. It emerges that only those who reside in the present have a chance at living with a peace of mind.

This week's Parsha, Va'eschanan (Devarim 4:4), tells us: “You who cling to Hashem - you are alive today.” (We also say this Pasuk before we start reading the Torah publicly in shul). On a basic level, the importance of this Pasuk is based on its juxtaposition. In the Pasuk before, Moshe Rabbeinu warned us not to worship idolatry, as it states (ibid. 4:3): “You saw that those who worshiped ba'al peor died.” Then, the Torah tells us, “But those of you who choose to cling to Hashem, you will live.”

However, the students of the Ba'al Shem Tov say something incredibly amazing on this Pasuk. Namely, they hint that Moshe wasn't just saying to stay away from idols, but was giving us the secret to successful, meaningful, and impactful living. What does it mean to be *davuk* – to cling? The first time we find this word is when Hashem creates Chava, and He talks to Adam about her (Bereishis 2:24): “A man will leave his mother and father; he will cling to his wife.” From this, we see that *deveikus* represents the highest level of connection. The same way that we hope that in a marriage, husband and wife are clinging to each other, So ultimately, we find this same word in the context of a relationship with Hashem, and the Torah tells us to attach ourselves to Him. It's not just enough to have a platonic relationship with Hashem and be friends. The question is, how do we actually cling to Hashem?

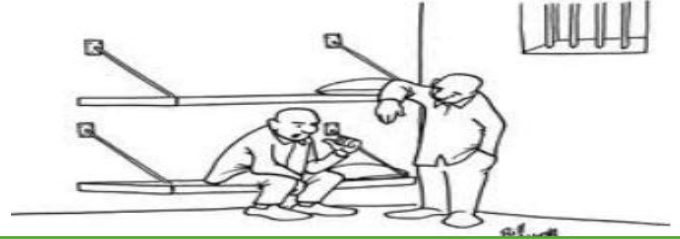
The answer is found at the end of our Pasuk: put the entirety of your life energy into *hayom* - into maximizing today. We spend so much time living in the past and/or future that we forget to maximize the one thing we emotionally have control over: today. Moshe says that if you want the sense of connection with Hashem, just live the best today possible. The only thing we can do with the past is to learn from it. On the flip side, who knows what the future brings? Moshe himself had an entire vision of the future in the Holy Land, and then in one moment says **Rabbi Shmuel Silber**, that entire future evaporated. We can prepare for the future, but we can't be hyper-focused on it because we never know what will be.

Our task as Jews is to take advantage of the opportunities that are in front of us today. One who maximizes the now is a person who ultimately lives a life of connection. So often, opportunities present themselves, and we think we will have them forever. That's how they just slip right through our fingers, and we lose out on connecting with Hashem because we're just not attentive enough to the present. The truth is, says Rabbi Silber, this is a message for Shabbos Nachamu as well. Since the redemption didn't come, we exit Tisha B'Av with so much pain and with so much heartbreak.

We have a future that's filled with so much light and beauty - the light of Moshiach and the Geulah. The key for happy living is to look to the future and learn from the past but spend most of our energies appreciating what's placed in front of us. Not only will our anxiety and depression decrease, but we will also be tapping into a connection with Hashem, which is the greatest gift imaginable!

THIS ARTICLE IS DEDICATED BY THE **WOLFF FAMILY** IN HONOR OF **SHLOMO CHAIM BEN TUVIA MOSHE** ON HIS GRADUATION FROM TI (TORAH INSTITUTE) IN BALTIMORE

THIS ARTICLE DEDICATED BY **MENDY AND MIRIAM PROFESORSKE** - HODU L'HASHEM KI TOV



“The only consolation is knowing that my lawyer is three cells down.”

A man was at the funeral of an old friend. He tentatively approached the deceased's wife and asked if he could say a word. She agreed, so the man cleared his throat and said, “Bargain.” The widow replied, “That means a great deal.” Another man came up and asked if he could also say a word, to which the widow acquiesced. The man thought for a moment and said, “Infinity.” The widow responded, “Thank you, that means more than you could possibly imagine.”

A third fellow came over and asked if he could share a word. “Please do,” the mourning lady countered. The man nervously blurted out, “water pit.” The widow replied, “Thanks, I know you mean well.” Finally, a fourth gentleman approached the widow and commented, “I’m truly sorry for your loss - he was a great and dear man.” The widow shot back: “It doesn’t sound like you knew him at all!”

To be able to console a mourner or someone who experienced loss is really an art form. How many horror stories do mourners go through at Shiva homes and funerals when well-meaning individuals say the wrong thing at the worst possible time? To truly give consolation, the most important goal is to give hope for the mourner to go on and rebuild their lives after the loss. Any words that don't fit into that framework must be avoided at all costs – even if they sound powerful and poetic.

We just emerged from a national mourning period as the Three Weeks, culminating with Tisha B'Av day that we just concluded. We sat on the floor, recited Eichah (lamentations), fasted, and felt affliction. Then, the next day, the Navi (Yeshaya 40:1) tells us, “*Nachamu Ami – be consoled, my people.*” Suddenly, we are dancing and jumping, singing after Shabbos as if Mashiach arrived. What is this great Nechama (consolation) when nothing has changed from the day before? Also, this coming week, we commemorate Tu B'Av, the 15th Day of Av. The Gemara (Ta'anis 26b) informs us that there were no greater days than Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur, seemingly making a similarity between both great days. What is special about Tu B'Av?

There is a fascinating **Ritva** who states we got the second Luchos on Yom Kippur, while on the 15th of Av, the last of the Jews who were meant to die in the Desert passed away. To mark this occasion, we eat a Seudah. The Ritva states that Shabbos Nachamu exists also because it's the Shabbos before Tu B'Av. Obviously, we must understand, 1) What is the exact consolation? 2) What's the similarity between Yom Kippur and Tu B'Av?

Let's develop this with a story about Choni Hama'agel. (Ta'anis 20a). Once, the people petitioned Choni to pray for rain. Choni prayed, but no rain fell. Choni drew a circle, stood in it, and said to Hashem: “I’m not budging from here until You have compassion on Your children!” A rain began to drizzle. Choni said, “I asked for rains to fill the cisterns, trenches, and reservoirs – not this.” The rains started coming down in torrents. Choni proclaimed: “That’s not it. I asked for rains of blessing and generosity.” →

FESTIVAL FINDINGS BY R' ZISHA KOHN (CONCLUSION)

Finally, proper rains began to fall, and he left the circle. There are many ways to pray to Hashem. Why did this great Tanna use the method to create a circle and threaten to not leave? The Gemara (ibid. 31a) speaks of another circle. On Tu B'av (and Yom Kippur), the single Jewish girls would go out and dance in a circle in the vineyards. Those who did not have a wife would go there to find one. Women of distinguished lineage, among them would say, "young man, please lift your eyes and see what you choose for a wife. What would the beautiful women among them say? Set your eyes toward beauty, as a wife is only for her beauty. What would those of distinguished lineage among them say? Set your eyes toward family, as a wife is only for children, and the kids of a wife from a distinguished family will inherit her lineage." Again, why was there a circle?

Yet another Gemara (ibid.) discusses a future circle. At the end of days, Hashem will arrange a dance of the righteous, and He will be sitting among them in the Gan Eden, and each and every one of the righteous will point to Hashem with his finger, as it is stated: "This is Hashem; for whom we waited. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." How do we understand the three circles in conjunction with Tu B'Av?

Perhaps, the following story (from "Flashes of Greatness" by **Rabbi Shlomo Landau**) can help us get a perspective. As Oz stood at the side of an empty road trying to hitch a ride home, he reflected on his last few weeks on the army base. He always dreamed of being part of an elite unit, but after rigorous training of the past few weeks, he wasn't sure. After what seemed like an eternity, a car finally pulled up and asked him where he was headed. Oz gave the name of his hometown, and the driver told him that he was going near there. As soon as he got into the car, the driver suddenly floored the car and raced down the road. In his hurry to get home, Oz hadn't bothered to check if the car had an Israeli license plate or if there were additional passengers in the car... Now he suddenly realized that there was another man in the back seat with him, and that one was speaking Arabic. Everything happened so quickly, and before Oz even had a chance to fight back, the two Arabs had him pinned down.

A while later, the car screeched to a halt. According to Oz's calculations, they were somewhere in the northern West Bank, and he was led to a vacant home and forced to sit down on a hard chair. A little later, the door burst open, and Oz heard several people entering. One of them pulled up a chair and said, "Jewish soldier, welcome to Jenin!" Then, in Arabic-accented Hebrew, he proceeded to interrogate Oz. The questions came fast and furious, but to each question Oz responded with stony silence. Suddenly, the blows began to rain down on Oz from every side as the Arabs in the room began to pummel him mercilessly. "Yahud, you think this is a game?? Answer my questions, or you will feel the full might of my men!" Still, Oz remained silent. At the point when Oz felt that he couldn't handle anymore, his interrogator ripped the hood off his head and extended his hand, and said, "Welcome to the Shabak (Israel's secret service). You passed the test!" The kidnapping and subsequent interrogation and beatings had all been a test of his endurance and commitment. "How did you do it?" the officer asked him. "Where did you draw the inner strength to persevere?"

"Honestly, about halfway through the interrogation, I was about to talk. I was in such agony that I didn't think that I could last for even one more minute. Then, I suddenly heard one of your men accidentally say something in Hebrew to his friend, and it dawned on me that this was a setup, and you were not against me but really on my side. Once that realization set in, I knew I'd persevere until you stopped!" The lesson is clear: yes, there is suffering and pain, but when we know Hashem is behind it, we know it's for our best, and that's a huge nechama itself. →

Let's look at it this way. If someone is at a wedding and he decides that he wants to dance in the center of the circle, he gets in the middle and starts dancing. However, if there is no circle around him, he's obviously not in the middle, even if he is dancing. It takes the people on the outside to create a circle that one can dance in the middle of. Choni was telling Hashem, "Look at the people – they are not worthy, but I want You to know that the righteous are only great because they are in the middle of Klal Yisrael. It takes the simple men and struggling individuals to make a circle. Just like you see, I am not leaving the circle until there is rain, I am only a tzaddik because the Jewish nation is around me."

At the time of a wedding, the custom is that a Chasan stands in place while his bride circles him under the Chuppah seven times, and she says, "Yes, the man is the center of the home, but he can only be the center if someone builds the home around him." It's the wife who creates the wall and builds the foundation in the home so the husband can be in the center. In the times of Mashiach, we will reach the utmost clarity that all our ups and downs - everything that happened that we thought was a failure. When we thought that we were distant from Hashem, it was Him creating the world with the most perfection. Every Tzaddik will sit around in a circle, and all will realize they are equidistant while Hashem is in the middle. Hashem is in the center, but He allowed the righteous to be the circle around Him. Through Hashem's great love for the Jews, he is really saying what Choni said, "I will never leave the circle. I am always in the circle, but for eternity, the Jewish nation will be the circle around Me." Hashem chose Klal Yisrael to be the circle around Him to be the ones that make Hashem be in the center. Hashem wants the world to be in a way that without us, He is not in the center. This is the Nechama of Shabbos Nachamu and Tu B'Av.

If we look carefully, we see what the Ritva was saying, "the greatness of Yom Kippur is that we were given the second luchos." This means we were given a second chance after we fell with the sin of the Golden Calf (we were disloyal to Hashem, like a bride who goes with another man right after the wedding). Hashem tells us that while we failed, that fall was just to become closer. When a couple makes up after their first marital argument is also when they discover that their marriage is that much stronger. Failing and getting up is the process that is needed to make closeness a reality and a bond unbreakable. The Jewish girls came out on Yom Kippur and Tu B'av into the vineyards (a mashal to grapes, which is children) and made a circle. Sometimes, there is beauty and sometimes there's a lineage, and other times there is neither.

Yet, the ability to create a solid foundation of knowing there is a foundation and a circle around is what the girls tapped into, symbolizing the relationship between Hashem and the Jews. Of course, we are waiting for the Beis Hamikdash to be rebuilt. However, there is a consolation even before that, which is that there is a relationship between Hashem and us that will never be broken. Even the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash is for us to rebuild the relationship. The Navi told us that as a people we failed terribly, and the Beis Hamikdash is gone, but Nachamu Ami – the greatest consolation is that Hashem says, "you're still My Ami – My nation."

The Beis Hamikdash is where we live with Hashem, but its purpose is to remember that no matter what, Hashem is our G-d and He will never leave us, and we are His Chosen people. That's the ultimate Nechama. We wait for the day that the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt, but we are still Hashem's nation even as we wait for its rebuilding. Hashem never punishes us for punishment's sake. The punishment is to make us closer and for us to remember how much He wants us and that He is in the center of the circle. However, we are the ones who need to build that circle around Him. When we truly realize that, we will see the great nechama - how much we really are His nation - and merit to see the Beis Hamikdash rebuilt in our days.

DEDICATED BY ARI BABAGANOV IN HONOUR OF HIS WIFE,
HAGIT

**AVARECHECHA B'CHAYAI
BY MICHAEL SPZILZINGER
VA'ESCHANAN – HASHEM'S DEBT**

This weekly column draws from Rabbeinu Bachye's introduction to each Parsha, linking it to a Pasuk in Mishlei, and offering practical insights.

“Malveh Hashem Chonen Dal, U’Gemulo Yeshalem Lo – G-d is a lender to him who is gracious to the poor; He will recompense him” (Mishlei 19:7)

Hashem: Lender or Borrower?

Rabbeinu Bachye understands that this Pasuk is not as referring to Hashem as the Malveh - the lender. The Chonen Dal, the one who shows grace to the pauper, is the lender to Hashem, as we will explain. When someone is wealthy, he can rely on his resources, or at the very least, lean on his network of connections to attain what he needs. The pauper has no economic resources and therefore will generally have no social circle to rely on. Therefore, the person who helps him out is doing so with Chein - as in B'Chinam. It is not out of the recipient being worthy, but for no other reason than the giver has decided to do a favor.

Why would he do so? It must be coming from a deep love of this person by nature of them being a child of Hashem. Therefore, Hashem “feels obligated” by this. What is interesting is the dynamic this creates. Elsewhere (Mishlei 22:7) Shlomo says, “*Eved Loveh L'Ish Malveh* - a debtor is subordinate to the lender.” What a novel Chiddush! It's as if we are saying that Hashem is now in servitude to the kind person. Hashem has no choice but to make this debt whole.

Furthermore, says Rabbeinu Bachye, it can't be that He will just pay back the exact debt. We wouldn't need Shlomo Hamelech to tell us the Din of a loan being paid back in full. When the Pasuk says “Gemulo Yeshalem Lo” it must be talking about special Schar (reward) in Olam Haba (next world) on top of what He has already paid out in Olam HaZeh (this world).

Connecting to the Parsha: “*V'Halchta B'Drachav - Mah Hu...Af Atah.*” We are implored to emulate the ways of Hashem. The Middos that we see Him managing the world are the ones that we are meant to imitate. In Parshas Ki Sisa, after the sin of the Eigel (Golden Calf), Hashem tells Moshe Rabbeinu about His ways. “*V'Chanosi Asher Achon* - I will show favor to whoever finds favor in My Eyes.” I will give them a Matnas Chinam even if they are not deserving, but only because I desire to.

We are meant to do the same with His people. That's why we see that the most appropriate attitude to come into Tefillah with is seeking Chen. Dovid Hamelech (Tehillim 30:9) says, “*To You, Hashem, I call, and to Hashem I will plead (eschanan).*” This is also why our Parsha opens with Moshe describing his Tefillos to Hashem as “*Va'eschanan el Hashem.*”

Takeaway: Giving with chein means seeing the person before seeing their worthiness.

Self-reflective question: When I daven for Hashem's chein, do I extend that same chein to the people around me?

**HAFTARAH HONEYCOMBS BY RABBI MOSHE KLEIN
SHABBOS NACHAMU – JEWS ARE POWERFUL STARS**

This week's Haftarah is the first of seven consoling the Jewish people. The haftarah starts (Yeshaya 40:1) with Hashem's words to Yeshaya, “*Nachamu nachamu ami* (Console, console my nation).” Why the double expression? It appears we need consolation for two things. What are they? Furthermore, we see in the following Pasuk (ibid. 40:2): “*Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim and call to her, for she has become filled (which **Rashi** explains that the time of galus has been filled) and her sin has been atoned.*” There seem to be two different things: 1) time that we must be in galus (exile) and 2) a sin that's atoned. The end of the Pasuk (ibid.) states that “for she has taken from the hand of Hashem double for all her sins.” We could understand double to imply that two different sins are happening and two different types of nechamos. How do we make sense of this?

To understand this, two Pesukim later (ibid 40:4) tells us: “*Every valley shall be raised, and every mountain and hill shall be lowered, and the crooked terrain shall become a plain and the close mountains a straight.*” This means there are two types of sins. One comes from haughtiness, where people believe that they can do things that others are not allowed to do, thinking too highly of themselves. This type of person can hurt and even kill people. The other type of sin is a more dangerous one, wherein one has no pulse on their self-worth. Not realizing what they have to offer the world, they end up not doing anything productive. These two distinct thought-processes in many ways correspond to the First Beis Hamikdash and the Second Beis Hamikdash.

During the First Beis Hamikdash, the Jews had a clear view of what they wanted to do, and if anyone stopped them, they had no problem hurting them. The entire idea behind Avodah Zarah (worship of idols) is to show that one doesn't need G-d. The people of the Second Beis Hamikdash were much more complicated than that. They had no idea of their own self-worth, so they looked at others and hated people who had more than them. People were busy hating on each other, and the reason for that is that they judged their neighbors by what they had or were doing. When one does that, he feels lost and hopeless. The mountain in the Pasuk above is speaking about the arrogant people, while the valleys represent those who think low of themselves and others.

Hashem says that when Moshiach comes, everything will be raised. The valleys will rise, which means that people will understand their self-worth and the self-worth of others. Also, the haughtiness of the mountains will go down; people will understand that they shouldn't be so full of themselves (referring to the sins that brought the destruction of the First Beis Hamikdash). For their mistakes, the Jews were expelled from the Beis Hamikdash, and there is a certain amount of time they had to spend in exile. That time was filled. The sin of not being able to love others is the other issue, and that's why there are two nechamos.

Yet, it's the last Pasuk in the Haftarah is the one that delivers the punchline. When Hashem counted the Jewish people, it is to help them when they into exile and attempt to survive knowing that they were being counted. Rashi (Shemos 1:1) adds that they are compared to the stars, which also Hashem brings out and brings in by number and name when they cease to shine. The stars are an extremely powerful light. On a scientific level, starlight is even brighter than sunlight; it's just that the stars are so far away. However, on a clear night, they are very visible.

If we are compared to stars, we face a test of thinking “what's our worth?” The issue is that we don't see ourselves during the day, but only at night. We must look properly at the right time to see the power of each star. When we understand that we are very powerful beings with a tremendous amount to offer, and each Neshama can accomplish so much, we would see others and ourselves appropriately. This is the last Pasuk in the Haftarah: (ibid. 40:26) “*Lift up your eyes on high and see, Who created these, Who takes out their host by number; all of them He calls by name; because of His great might and because He is strong in power, no one is missing.*”

If we realize that each person is immense with tremendous abilities, we will stop hating other people, and that will bring the geulah (Final Redemption). This is the idea behind the second nachamu (consolation). Instead of looking at ourselves as low as a valley, we should look at ourselves as something chashuv (important) and valuable. That's the key to bringing the Geulah.

THIS ARTICLE DEDICATED BY THE **GRUENFELD FAMILY** IN HONOR OF **RABBI MOSHE KLEIN** AND FAMILY AND THE ENTIRE TORAH SWEETS TEAM

The month of Av is often identified with mourning and tragedy, yet this characterization is only partially accurate. While the first third of the month culminates in the national mourning of Tisha B'Av, the remainder of Av reflects a profound transition from grief to consolation. Both halachah and hashkafah teach that Yiddishkeit never allows mourning to become an end in itself. Rather, it serves as the foundation for renewal and redemption. Halachically, the Mishnah (Ta'anis 26b) teaches, "*when Av begins, we diminish our joy.*" The restrictions intensify through the Nine Days and culminate on Tisha B'Av. Once the fast ends, however, the laws of mourning are largely suspended.

The **Shulchan Aruch** (Orach Chaim 558) rules that eating meat, drinking wine, bathing, laundering, and haircuts once again become permitted, although Ashkenazic custom postpones some of these practices until Chatzos on the tenth of Av because the Beis HaMikdash continued burning after sunset on Tisha B'Av. This Minhag reflects an important principle: while halachic mourning has defined limits, the memory of the Churban remains enduring. The second half of Av reaches its climax on Tu B'Av, about which the Mishnah famously states: "There were no greater Yomim Tovim for Klal Yisrael than the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur."

The Gemara explains that Tu B'Av commemorates several events of reconciliation and national healing, including the lifting of marriage restrictions with Shevet Binyamin and the end of the decree upon the generation of the Midbar. It is striking that the greatest celebration of the summer follows immediately after the greatest national tragedy, demonstrating that Jewish history continually moves from destruction toward rebuilding. This movement is echoed in the Haftarah cycle as well. Beginning with the Shabbos after Tisha B'Av, we read the *Shiva D'Nechemta*, the seven Haftoras of consolation from the Navi Yeshayahu. **Rav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik**, ZT"L, observed that Yiddishkeit does not erase grief; rather, it sanctifies it by transforming mourning into collective national responsibility.

Consolation comes not through forgetting the past but through renewing our commitment to Torah and Mitzvos. The **Maharal** explains that every apparent destruction in Jewish history contains within it the potential for greater renewal. This idea is reflected in the Midrash that Mashiach is born on Tisha B'Av. The teaching is not primarily historical but hashkafic: at the very point where Geulah seems furthest away, Hashem has already planted its beginning. Rav Kook develops this theme further, explaining that the pain of exile awakens within the Jewish nation a deeper yearning for holiness, unity, and the rebuilding of Tzion. Therefore, the Churban becomes the catalyst for ruchniyus growth. Thus, the status of Av after Tisha B'Av is one of hopeful transition.

Halachah restores normal life while preserving the memory of the Mikdash, and hashkafah teaches that consolation is itself an act of faith. We emerge from Tisha B'Av not because the loss has diminished, but because we believe Hashem's promise that mourning will ultimately be transformed into joy. As Zechariah (8:19) prophesizes, the fasts commemorating destruction will one day become "*days of gladness and joy.*" The latter half of Av invites us to live with that confidence, rebuilding our communities and ourselves until the consolation of the Nevi'im is realized.

There is a beautiful Pasuk in this week's parsha that states (Devarim 4:29): "*From there you will seek Hashem your G-d, and you will find him, if you search for Him with all of your heart and all of your soul.*" **Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch**, ZT"L, comments that when the Pasuk says, "from there," it is referring to the previous Pasuk (ibid. 4:28), "*There you will be submissive to gods, the work of human hands, wood and stone, that neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.*" According to Rav Hirsch, we are being informed by the Torah that in Galus (exile), we will be immersed in the midst of a secular society that will attract us. Whatever the popular conception is, whatever physical forces are deified, we will feel the full impact of it. If it's the latest model car, the belief that everything is "random" or whatever else our host society stands for, we will be influenced and affected by it. This could cause us to divest ourselves from our own spiritual grandeur, to look outside for our spiritual nourishment, Chas V'shalom.

Yet, from here - from this disillusionment - we will seek Hashem. Out of this contrast, we will look inward to our portion in this world, and with our whole being and all our aspirations, we will seek Hashem, and we will find him. Once we become aware of his liberating nearness, this will enable us and bring us happiness. Even surrounded by secular influences, we can attain nearness to Hashem if we are intentional and we turn to him with all our hearts and all our souls. The same lesson can be applied to our marriages. Marriage is subject to all sorts of outside and inner influences. We can flip through a Jewish magazine and be bombarded with images that scream out that happiness comes from having stuff. We can then look at our spouse and wonder why we don't have all the stuff. We can fall for the message that materialistically, kallahs deserve the best; then we can come to our spouse with demands that are unrealistic or out of our financial reach.

We can be influenced by the media and view our wives as status symbols instead of appreciating and seeing all the real lasting positivity they are bringing to the home. We can blame our spouse for the lack of our perceptual needs, instead of seeing Hashem behind our nisyans (test). All of this can cause us to be living in comparison instead of living in gratitude. Another example of this is when we feel bad about something inside ourselves that we can't let go of. Instead of being genuine and processing our feelings of angst, disappointment, or hurt and being vulnerable with our spouse, we switch to the rhetoric of blame and anger and direct those negative feelings towards our spouse. If left to outside influences, marriage can suffer.

We need to take to heart this Pasuk and be intentional when we interact with our spouse. We want to compliment our spouse; we want to see them through Hashem's eyes as a *Tzelem Elokim* who is worthy of love and respect. We want to focus on all the good our spouse brings to us just by existing. Just like we can attain closeness with Hashem if we are intentional and seek Him, so too, we can attain closeness with our spouse if we are intentional and we seek Shleimus. It's not easy to recognize we are being influenced by sources outside the Torah, and it's not easy to process our feelings and share them, putting us in a state of vulnerability. However, the dividends are worth the effort. May Hashem bless our homes with an abundance of Shalom Bayis!

**SUGAR RUSH OF 613 MITZVOS BY R'ELI REIT
MITZVAH # 221 – YIFAS TO'AR**

When going out to war, a Jewish soldier may see a local non-Jewish woman and desire to cohabitate with her. The Torah requires him to first do various things to make her undesirable. Then he is allowed to marry her, as the Pasuk (Devarim 21:11) says, "*...And you will see in the spoils of war, a beautiful woman.*" Even if she was married to a non-Jewish man at that time, the Jewish soldier may only take one such wife at a time. The Jewish soldier cannot have relations with her in public, but only in a house. The Torah is cognizant of a man's desire and therefore created a permissible format for this desire so that he won't do so through sinfully.

In Pasha's Va'eschanan, we have the Aseres Hadibros (Ten Commandments) for the second time. The first time was in Parshas Yisro. The fifth commandment (Devarim 5:16) is the command to *“honor your father and mother”*. When people are asked what the reward for honoring parents is, they say long life. If we look at the wording of the command itself, we will see that this is a very incomplete answer. The Torah actually says, *“Honor your father and mother as Hashem, your G-d, commanded you, in order that you will live long, and it will be good for you on the land that Hashem, your G-d, is giving you.”*

There are two additions to the idea of long life. One is, it is specifically in the land of Israel. Why is that? We wrote the answer to that question in our piece on Parshas Yisro. There is another addition that is not mentioned in Parshas, and that is, *“and it will be good for you.”* What does it will be good for you mean? Is it an abundant livelihood? Perhaps fame or health? The Torah seems ambiguous.

An amazing explanation is given by the **Malbim**, who was way ahead of Martin Seligman, the founder of the positive psychology movement, and ahead of Viktor Frankl, who, in his major work, *“Man's Search for Meaning”*, speaks about the reality that how we view things affects how they are.

The Malbim asks why we need to respect parents. He answers that we need to have gratitude for our parents for the huge gift they gave us - the gift of life. Parenthetically, (interesting that this word starts with parent), those people who let their parents make major decisions for them are making a huge mistake. They gave us the gift of life. Life is the ability to make choices. If we let parents make the decisions for us, we are giving back the gift. We show appreciation for a gift by using it, and not by giving it back to the one who gave it to us. The Malbim continues: *“If we respect our parents, that shows we appreciate the gift. We are essentially saying that life is good and valuable. If your view is that life is good, then life will be good.”* What an incredible insight!

THIS ARTICLE IS DEDICATED ANONYMOUSLY

SUGARY SAYING BY RAV MENACHEM LOMNER

“If you want to make up with someone, you must first stop slapping that person.”

In the Aseres Hadibros, Hashem tells us that He will punish those who serve idols. Not only that, but He will penalize the children, grandchildren, and their great grandchildren because of this idol worship. Interestingly, the Pasuk (Devarim 5:9) adds *“for those who hate Me.”* The Targum explains this to mean that if the children continue serving idols, they will also bear the brunt of their fathers' punishment.

Obviously, we see that if you continue mistreating someone, it shows that you hate that person. We all want to be better in interpersonal Mitzvos and be zocheh to Moshiach, but to do this, we cannot just say we are sorry and continue hurting the other party. Let's try to improve our ways and continue that road to excellence.

As this piece is being written, the Beis Hamikdash is unfortunately not yet here; we cannot know whether it arrives at the time you are reading this article. Either way, we can still discuss perfecting our attitudes towards other Jews. If the Beis Hamikdash is not here, we obviously still have room for growth. If it is here, although we know that the third Beis Hamikdash will not be destroyed, we still are required to maintain friendly and peaceful relations with others, as the Mitzvos of the Torah are eternal. Let us mention a few more points which can be helpful in attaining these attitudes, B'ezer Hashem.

1) The Mishnah (Avos 1:6) tells us *“Vehevei dan es kol ha'adam lekaf zechus – we must judge every person favorably.”* **Rav Michel Barenbaum, ZT”L**, the late Mashgiach of Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim, asks as follows: If the Mishnah wants to tell us to judge every person favorably, it should say *“kol adam,”* which means every person, not *“kol ha'adam,”* which means the entire person. He answered that this is a hint in advising us how to look at people favorably. We often judge people by magnifying one individual negative action or one negative character trait, thereby looking down at the person altogether.

The Mishnah is telling us that we should train ourselves to look at the entire person. Yes, he did so-and-so, which is not so praiseworthy, but look at all the good he does. Today, he was not so nice, but think of how helpful he was yesterday. Yes, he isn't so patient, but look at how kind he is and how much tzedakah he gives. If we train ourselves to look at people in this light, it will be easier to judge even their seemingly negative actions favorably. Because he is really a good person, it is very possible that even the seemingly negative is not coming from a negative source with bad intentions.

2) The Gemara (Berachos 58a) tells us that people do not look alike, and similarly, they don't think alike. **Rabbi Refoel Green, ZT”L**, shared a beautiful concept, which is a strong lesson in how to minimize negative feelings towards others. Have you ever heard someone approach another person yelling at them, *“I can't stand you! Why don't you look the way I look?!”* We would obviously think that there is no merit to such a complaint because everyone understands that one is not in control of the way they were created. Rather, Hashem decided how to fashion each individual, and therefore no one complains if one does not look like them. However, people do get upset and agitated when others don't see things the way they do. Therefore, we must realize that just like Hashem fashioned everyone's outer appearance differently from one another, so too, He fashioned everyone's mind differently from one another. Therefore, telling someone *“Why don't you see things the way I do?”* (which is, of course, the correct way) is like telling someone *“Why don't you look the way I do?”*

3) The **Chofetz Chaim, ZT”L**, (Shemiras Halashon, Shaar Hatevunah chapter 6) brings the following thought based on the Gemara Yerushalmi. If an individual was walking and he tripped over one of his own feet, and as a result, got hurt badly in his face and in the rest of his body, including the foot that caused him to trip. This person will not be upset at the foot that caused him to trip. He won't punish it by not healing it, and he won't even have any hatred towards it because he and his foot are one and the same. He will just think that his sins caused him to fall, and his foot is not the antagonist. This is the attitude we must have regarding our feelings for other Jews. This is because, in essence, we are all one and the same. We all stem from the same root, as the Pasuk (Divrei Hayamim I, 17:21) states: *“Who is like Yisrael one nation in the land?”*

This teaches us that we are really all one and in Heaven, all the souls of all Jews are like one soul. It's just that everyone has his/her own mission, just as there are different parts of the body – head, heart, hands, and feet that make up one complete picture. This concept is also mentioned in the sefer **Tomer Devorah** (chapter 1) where he writes that the Jewish people are considered Hashem's relatives and Hashem looks to favor them, saying, *“They are My close relatives, what can I do for them?”* As we find that we are referred to as Hashem's wife, Hashem's sister, Hashem's daughter, etc.

This is how we must feel towards one another as all of our neshamos are connected. He writes that because of this idea, everyone should look forward to another Jew's success and not speak disparagingly of him. Just as Hashem is hurt by our pain because of His close relation to us. And when another Jew is in pain, we should feel literally as if we are in pain. And when he is joyous, we should be joyous. If we attain this mindset, we will, B'Ezer Hashem, be quicker to forgive the wrongdoing of others to us.

Let's take an idea from **Rav Yitzchak Isaac Sher**, ZT"l, (in the *Leket Sichos Mussar*). In this week's Parsha (Devarim 6:10-12), the Torah states: *"When Hashem brings you into the land that was sworn to your fathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, to be assigned to you - great and flourishing cities that you did not build, houses full of all good things that you did not fill, dug cisterns that you did not dig, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant - and you eat your fill, take heed that you do not forget Hashem, who freed you from the land of Egypt."* Sometimes, when we're doing these first Parshiyos in Devarim, the wording seems repetitive. Rav Sher contrasts this with next week's Parasha, Eikev (ibid. 8:11): *"Be careful that you don't forget Hashem. Maybe you will eat and be full in these great houses that you're living in. You'll have gold, silver, sheep, and cattle, and then your heart will be lifted, and you'll forget Hashem."* So, aren't they both saying the same thing?

He says that it could be at first blush, but if you look at it a little deeper, you'll see that the first one says you're going to come into Eretz Yisrael and you're going to have so much bracha and good stuff. You will forget Hashem because you're so busy enjoying all the great physical stuff Hashem gave you that you forget Him. However, in Parshas Eikev, it says, "Be careful when you sit down and enjoy all this good stuff, not to say, 'I did it.' When one says, "I accomplished all of this because I'm so smart," then what are you telling Hashem? He might as well take it away from me because I don't appreciate it.

When the economic collapse occurred around Purim of 2008, there were people who lost everything, and they were asking, "why me?" **Rav Moshe Shapiro**, ZT"l, remarked, "Did they question Hashem when they made all their money; did they wonder why He made it happen? If yes, they can also then ask why Hashem took it away." Otherwise, it's just the market - sometimes it goes up, and other times it goes down. If one turns to Hashem and tells Him, "I accomplished it because I'm so clever," then Hashem may (*Chas V'shalom*) take it away from us to remind us that He is G-d and not us. We should have the zechus to appreciate all the bracha and not get distracted from it. At the same time, we can focus on the greatness that Hashem has given us.

SHORT STORY OF THE WEEK BY YONI SCHWARTZ

There was a man named Baruch who lived in Israel whose son, Amit, was tragically killed while serving in the army. Sometime afterward, he went to visit **Rav Chaim Kanievsky**, ZT"l. Rav Chaim's grandson recognized Baruch and, noticing that he was wearing Amit's dog tag, introduced him by saying, "This is the father of a great hero." With deep empathy, Rav Chaim reached out and gently held the dog tag. Then he touched Baruch's face and said, "Your son is sitting in Heaven, as close as one can be to Hashem's Throne of Glory, learning Torah with Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai." Upon hearing those words, Baruch began to cry. He couldn't understand how Rav Chaim knew that Amit's birthday fell on Lag Ba'Omer.

On his way home, he felt as though he was in a daze. He stopped at a gas station, where a woman he had never met approached him and asked, "Are you the father of Amit?" She continued, "Last night I had a dream about your son. He was sitting as close as possible to Hashem's Throne of Glory with Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai."

At that moment, Baruch paused, looked up to the heavens, and asked Hashem, "What do You want from me?" When Baruch later retold the story, he said that remarkable as these experiences were, the moment that moved him most was something much quieter: Rav Chaim had written a letter in a Sefer Torah in Amit's memory.

Comment: In this week's parsha, Va'eschanan, we encounter a striking Pasuk (Devarim 7:9): "Hashem guards the covenant and the kindness." In other words, when we do our part, Hashem does not merely fulfill His obligations (i.e., "the covenant"). Going above and beyond (i.e., "the kindness") is part of His very nature. What is most striking is how Rav Chaim understood that for a Jew, kindness isn't merely a nice "add-on" to the moral life but its very backbone. To console somebody in pain, one doesn't require a PhD in psychology but merely empathy, warmth, and a genuine desire to do kindness.

The Gemara (Ta'anis 30b, Bava Basra 120a) teaches us, *"There were no greater Yomim Tovim for Klal Yisroel than Yom Kippur and the fifteenth of Av."* We all understand why Yom Kippur is considered one of the greatest Yamim Tovim. It is the momentous day on which we are forgiven for all the Aveiros (sins) that we committed throughout the year. However, what significance does the fifteenth of Av carry? What places it among the highest echelon of days on the Jewish calendar, on the caliber of Yom Kippur itself?

The Gemara offers many answers to this question. Let's focus on the answer posited by Rabbah and Rav Yosef – that they celebrated the fact that on the 15th of Av, they completed the task of chopping wood for the Beis Hamikdash (see **Rashi**, Ta'anis ibid.). Why was this such a profound Simcha? Rabbeinu Gershom (Bava Basra, ibid.) explains that since the Jews were no longer busy chopping wood, they had more time to learn Torah. The greatness of Tu B'Av, which places it at the same lofty level as Yom Kippur, is because on that day, those responsible for chopping wood for the Beis Hamikdash returned to the Beis Midrash.

Rav Shlomo Schneider, ZT"l, (Shu"t Divrei Shlomo, Vol. III Siman 418) points out a powerful lesson we can glean from this. Although they had to spend some time chopping wood, surely those people devoted the rest of their time to Limud HaTorah. When the time to chop the wood had passed, they had only gained a few more hours of learning. Yet, these few hours of learning by those few people are so beloved and treasured by the Hashem that they warrant a Yom Tov matched only by the holiest day of the year!

This shows us the inestimable value of every second of Limud HaTorah in the eyes of Hashem. Every second of learning is worth celebrating! When we sit down to learn, it should be with the joy of knowing how truly valuable our Torah is. The Gemara (Nedarim 81a) says that Eretz Yisrael was destroyed because Klal Yisroel didn't say Birchos HaTorah before learning. Was this really such an egregious transgression that it necessitated the Churban?

The **Ran** quotes **Rabbeinu Yonah**, who explains that the Land wasn't simply destroyed because Klal Yisrael failed to recite a blessing. It was destroyed because they didn't see Limud HaTorah as something valuable enough to make a Bracha on. They were lacking in the area that we are discussing – the profound Simcha that comes with recognizing the unbelievable value of Torah. **Rav Chaim Volozhiner**, ZT"l, (Ruach Chaim 6:6) writes that what can be accomplished by learning for one hour with Simcha is greater than learning for many hours without Simcha. May we all be zocheh to recognize the immense value of Torah and utilize every second to learn with true joy!

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