

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

At the beginning of Devarim, Moses reviews the history of the Israelites' experience in the wilderness, beginning with the appointment of leaders throughout the people, heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. He continues: "And I charged your judges at that time, 'Hear the disputes between your people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among you. Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of anyone, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it.'" (Deut. 1:16-17)

Thus at the outset of the book in which he summarized the entire history of Israel and its destiny as a holy people, he already gave priority to the administration of justice: something he would memorably summarize in a later chapter (16:20) in the words, "Justice, justice, shall you pursue." The words for justice, *tzedek* and *mishpat*, are repeated, recurring themes of the book. The root *tz-d-k* appears eighteen times in Devarim; the root *sh-f-t*, forty-eight times.

Justice has seemed, throughout the generations, to lie at the beating heart of Jewish faith. Albert Einstein memorably spoke of "the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, an almost fanatical love of justice, and the desire for personal independence -- these are the features of the Jewish tradition which make me thank my lucky stars that I belong to it." In the course of a television programme I made for the BBC I asked Hazel Cosgrove, the first woman to be appointed as a judge in Scotland, and an active member of the Edinburgh Jewish community, what had led her to choose law as a career, she replied as if it was self-evident, "Because Judaism teaches: Justice, justice shall you pursue."

One of the great Jewish lawyers of our time, Alan Dershowitz, is about to bring out a book about Abraham, whom he sees as the first Jewish lawyer, "the patriarch of the legal profession: a defense lawyer for the damned who is willing to risk everything, even the wrath of God, in defense of his clients," the founder not just of monotheism but of a long line of Jewish lawyers. Dershowitz gives a vivid description of Abraham's prayer on behalf of the people of Sodom

("Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?") as a courtroom drama, with Abraham acting as lawyer for the citizens of the town, and God, as it were, as the accused. This was the forerunner of a great many such episodes in Torah and Tanakh, in which the prophets argued the cause of justice with God and with the people.

In modern times, Jews reached prominence as judges in America: among them Brandeis, Cardozo, and Felix Frankfurter. Ruth Bader Ginsburg was the first Jewish woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court. In Britain, between 1996 and 2008, two of Britain's three Lord Chief Justices were Jewish: Peter Taylor and Harry Woolf. In Germany in the early 1930s, though Jews were 0.7 per cent of the population, they represented 16.6 per cent of lawyers and judges.

One feature of Tanakh is noteworthy in this context. Throughout the Hebrew Bible some of the most intense encounters between the prophets and God are represented as courtroom dramas. Sometimes, as in the case of Moses, Jeremiah and Habakkuk, the plaintiff is humanity or the Jewish people. In the case of Job it is an individual who has suffered unfairly. The accused is God himself. The story is told by Elie Wiesel of how a case was brought against God by the Jewish prisoners in a concentration camp during the Holocaust. (The Trial of God, Schocken, 1995. The story is believed to be fictional, though on one occasion Wiesel said that it happened and that he was there.) At other times, it is God who brings a case against the children of Israel.

The word the Hebrew Bible uses for these unique dialogues between heaven and earth is *riv*, which means a law-suit, and it derives from the idea that at the heart of the relationship between God and humanity -- both in general, and specifically in relation to the Jewish people -- is covenant, that is, a binding agreement, a mutual pledge, based on obedience to God's law on the part of humans, and on God's promise of loyalty and love on the part of heaven. (On the subject in general, see Anson Laytner, *Arguing with God: A Jewish Tradition*, Jason Aronson, 1977.) Thus either side can, as it were, bring the other to court on grounds of failure to fulfill their undertakings.

Three features mark Judaism as a distinctive faith. First is the radical idea that when God reveals himself to humans He does so in the form of law. In the ancient world, God was power. In Judaism, God is

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order, and order presupposes law. In the natural world of cause and effect, order takes the form of scientific law. But in the human world, where we have freewill, order takes the form of moral law. Hence the name of the Mosaic books: Torah, which means 'direction, guidance, teaching,' but above all 'law.' The most basic meaning of the most fundamental principle of Judaism, Torah min ha-Shamayim, 'Torah from Heaven,' is that God, not humans, is the source of binding law. (Not the only meaning, to be sure. See Rambam, Hilkhot Teshuvah 3:5.)

Second, we are charged with being interpreters of the law. That is our responsibility as heirs and guardians of the Torah she-be-al peh, the Oral Tradition. The phrase in which Moses describes the voice the people heard at the revelation at Sinai, kol gadol velo yasaf, is understood by the commentators in two seemingly contradictory ways. On the one hand it means 'the voice that was never heard again'; on the other, it means 'the voice that did not cease,' that is, the voice that was ever heard again. (Deut. 5:19, and see Rashi ad loc., who gives both interpretations.) There is, though, no contradiction. The voice that was never heard again is the one that represents the Written Torah. The voice that is ever heard again is that of the Oral Torah.

The Written Torah is min ha-shamayim, "from Heaven," but about the Oral Torah the Talmud insists Lo ba-shamayim hi, "It is not in heaven." (Baba Metzia 59b) Hence Judaism is a continuing conversation between the Giver of the law in Heaven and the interpreters of the law on Earth. That is part of what the Talmud means when it says that "Every judge who delivers a true judgment becomes a partner with the Holy One, blessed be He, in the work of creation." (Shabbat 10a)

Third, fundamental to Judaism is education, and fundamental to Jewish education is instruction in Torah, that is, the law. That is what Isaiah meant when he said, "Listen to Me, you who know justice, the people in whose heart is My law; do not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their insults" (Is. 51:7). It is what Jeremiah meant when he said, "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them,

and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). It is what Josephus meant when he said, nineteen hundred years ago, "Should any one of our nation be asked about our laws, he will repeat them as readily as his own name." The result of our thorough education in our laws from the very dawn of intelligence is that they are, as it were, engraved on our souls. To be a Jewish child is to be, in the British phrase, "learned in the law." We are a nation of constitutional lawyers.

Why? Because Judaism is not just about spirituality. It is not simply a code for the salvation of the soul. It is a set of instructions for the creation of what the late Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein z"l called "societal beatitude." It is about bringing God into the shared spaces of our collective life. That needs law: law that represents justice, honoring all humans alike regardless of colour or class, that judges impartially between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, even in extremis between humanity and God, the law that links God, its Giver, to us, its interpreters, the law that alone allows freedom to coexist with order, so that my freedom is not bought at the cost of yours.

Small wonder, then, that there are so many Jewish lawyers. ©2015 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The biblical reading of Devarim always falls out on the Sabbath preceding Tisha Be'av, the fast commemorating the destruction of our Holy Temples. This is not merely an "accident" of the calendar; in our portion, Moses reviews his life and he cries out, "How (eicha) can I bear your troublesomeness and your burdens and your belittling barbs?" (Deut. 1:12), a verse which begins with the same word that opens the Scroll of Lamentations ("How [Eicha] does she sit alone, the city once filled with our people?") The Torah reader on the Sabbath chants the Torah verse Eicha with the same haunting melody used for the Eicha reading on Tisha Be'av.

What is the significance of the destruction of the Temple? How important could the Temple have been if Judaism managed to survive without it for the last 2,000 years? And how many modern Jews can really identify with the slaughter of animals as offerings in a Temple? By exploring a fundamental difference of opinion between two great Jewish leaders—Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and Rabbi Akiva—we can gain insight into the significance of our Temple, and the irretrievable loss we suffered as a result of its destruction.

As the Romans besieged Jerusalem, Rabbi Yohanan managed to leave the city and meet with Vespasian, the leader of the Roman armed forces carrying out the siege. The rabbi requested that the

Romans spare the city of Yavne and its wise men, the Sanhedrin of sages.

Rabbi Yohanan was willing to relinquish Jerusalem and the Temple so long as the Jews could remain in Israel and maintain their ongoing interpretations of the Oral Law.

Approximately six decades later, Rabbi Akiva bitterly condemned this accommodating stance of Rabbi Yohanan (even though he taught both of Rabbi Akiva's own two teachers, Rabbi Yehoshua and R. Eliezer), referring to a verse from the Prophet Isaiah which he applied to Rabbi Yohanan: "God turns the sages backwards and transforms their wisdom into foolishness" (Isa. 44:25) (B.T. Gittin 56b). Apparently, Rabbi Akiva believed that Rabbi Yohanan gave up too much too soon, that he should have continued to fight in order to retain Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Indeed, Rabbi Akiva put his ideas into practice by spearheading the Bar Kochba rebellion against Rome (135 CE) for the avowed purpose of Israel's liberation of Jerusalem and rebuilding of the Holy Temple.

What was the fundamental difference of opinion between these sages? Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai believed that, apart from the prohibitions of murder, sexual immorality and idolatry, the only value for which one may forfeit one's life is the survival of the Jewish nation. This explains why the Bible introduces the concept of a life-endangering obligatory war (milhemet mitzva) for the sake of the conquering the Land of Israel at the dawn of our history, because without the Land of Israel there would never have developed the nation of Israel. Given the overwhelming might of the Roman Empire and the Roman armies, Rabbi Yohanan concluded that if the Land of Israel and the Torah of Israel could be secured—Yavne and its wise men—it would be unnecessary and even halachically unacceptable to risk the survival of the Jewish people in a war for Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Rabbi Akiva believed differently. He understood the function of the Holy Temple and Jerusalem as being cardinal to the mission of Israel, a holy nation and a kingdom of priest-teachers (to the world) through whom all of the families of the earth are to be blessed.

The people of Israel were entrusted to teach the world that God created every human being in His Divine image, that each individual must be free and inviolable, and that our God of love and morality demands a world of peace and security for all. The city from which this message must emanate is the City of Jerusalem, the City of Peace (Yeru Shalom); the mechanism by which this mission is to be advanced is the Holy Temple, the beacon from which the Torah will go forth to all nations of the world, impressing upon them how "swords must be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift sword above nation and humanity will not learn war anymore"

(Isa. 2:4). Rabbi Akiva believed that unless we disseminate this teaching to the world, there is no purpose to our national being; hence the centrality of our Messianic vision and the necessity of continuing to fight for Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Bar Kochba's revolt ended in failure. The subsequent Hadrianic persecutions and the resulting Jewish exile wrought havoc upon our nation, and it became clear to the overwhelming majority of our sages that Rabbi Akiva was wrong and Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai had been correct. He had rescued Judaism by his initiating the "exchange" with Vespasian.

But our situation has radically changed. Contemporary history, post-Holocaust, teaches us that the nation of Israel cannot survive without a Jewish state and a Jewish army. We live in a global village where one madman with nuclear power can (God forbid) destroy the entire world. This teaches us that, unless the inviolability of the human being and the universal acceptance of a God of peace becomes an axiom of all humanity, there will be no free humanity left in the world, and certainly no Jewish nation. Rabbi Akiva has been vindicated for our times; only by teaching fundamental absolute morality in our City of Peace can we secure the future of Israel and the free world. ©2015 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The book of Dvarim begins on a somber note. In fact the entire book, for most of its contents and statements, is a very sobering volume. Our teacher and leader Moshe reviews for us his career and the events of his leadership of Israel over the past tumultuous forty years. He spares neither himself nor the people of Israel in his assessment of the mistakes and misfortunes that occurred over that period of time. Only at the very end of this volume with soaring poetry and exalted prose does Moshe predict the eventual happy ending to the story of Jewish and general human civilization.

But it seems apparent from the entire tenor and tone of the book that this essential success and happiness will be bought at great cost and enduring painful memories. The realistic appraisal given by Moshe of the failings of the Jewish people are difficult to absorb and appreciate. After all, this was in a certain sense the greatest generation of Jews ever – the generation that left Egypt, stood at Sinai and accepted the Torah and thereby fashioned the Jewish people for all time.

If they were so weak and failed to reach their goals then what shall we, certainly a lesser generation in spirit and holiness, expect to accomplish. But that certainly is not the message that Moshe wished to transmit to us. Apathy, giving up on goals and on our ability to achieve them, is contrary to all basic Jewish

values and Torah teachings. The words of Moshe are meant to be will guideposts and warnings, pointing out the pitfalls of the past so that the goals of the present and the future can be achieved and realized.

The problems and failings discussed by Moshe and even more explicitly detailed by Isaiah in the prophetic reading of this week are all current events in our society and milieu. Before they can be dealt with, improved upon or even eliminated, they must first be recognized and admitted to exist. Much of the Jewish world, today, as in the past, indulges in the fantasy of denial.

Rather than dealing with problems, accepting challenges, recognizing the changing nature of societies, we prefer to ignore these realities and pretend that all is well. If the prophet Isaiah were to stand before us today, he perhaps would not change his message or temper his words much in viewing our world.

One feels the frustration of the prophet at having his words ignored and his message unrecognized. It is the unrealistic view of the people and of its leaders' will, the inability to recognize the changed nature of the problems that face the Jewish society then and now that most disheartened the prophet.

Like Moshe before him, Isaiah paints for us a realistic picture of the failings of Jewish society in the hope that recognizing the problem will help, eventually, lead it to its solution and elimination. The destruction of the Temples and the ensuing troubles that marked Jewish history are usually attributed to the will of God. That certainly is true but that supposes that as in all matters of human life, it is human choice and behavior to which the will of God, so to speak, reacts.

An honest appraisal of the true nature of our society and its problems will help us rise from the sadness of these days and allow us to reach the rosy future that will inevitably come. ©2015 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Many events in the book of Bereishit (Genesis) repeat themselves in Devarim (Deuteronomy) with one major difference. Whereas Genesis is a narrative which focuses on individuals, Devarim focuses on the nations who have emerged from these individuals.

Consider for example the story in this week's portion of the children of Yaakov (Jacob), Am Yisrael, asking the children of Esav (Esau) for permission to go through their land on their way to Israel. It is a reversal

of the story of the confrontation between Esav and Yaakov as found in the Genesis narrative.

In Bereishit Esau comes from the field tired and buys food from Yaakov. (Genesis 25:34) Here in Devarim, it is the Jews weary from years of wandering in the desert, who try to buy food and water from the children of Esav. (Devarim 2:6)

In Bereishit, Yaakov rejects traveling with Esav, but promises to rendezvous with him one day in Seir. That promise is never fulfilled in their lifetime. (Genesis 33:14) Yet, here in Devarim, the Israelites finally connect with the children of Esav in Seir, and are rejected. (Numbers 20:21; Devarim 2:8)

Note also the similarity in language. In preparation for his meeting with Esav, Jacob wrestles with a mysterious stranger and is struck in the hollow (kaf) of his thigh (Genesis 32:26). In Devarim, God tells the Jews not to antagonize the children of Esav, "For I shall not give you of their land, even the right to set foot (kaf) there." (Deuteronomy 2:5) Rabbi Yitzhak Twersky notes that the use of the uncommon term kaf in both places point; the reader to a similarity between these episodes.

Indeed, both stories also intersect in that they deal with fear. In Genesis it is Yaakov who is afraid before meeting Esav. In the words of the Torah, "Yaakov became very frightened." (Bereishit 32:8) Here, in Devarim it's the children of Esav who are frightened as the Israelites draw near. As the Torah states: "The Lord said to me (Moshe)...command the people saying 'you are passing through the boundary of your brothers, the children of Esav, who dwell in Seir; they will fear you.'" (Devarim 2:4, 5)

One can't help but note that the parallel stories in Devarim are often the reverse of the Bereishit narrative. Thus, events in Devarim could be viewed as a corrective to what unfolded in Bereishit. A real appreciation of feeling the pain of another only comes when one feels that very pain. Perhaps Am Yisrael, the children of Yaakov, had to learn this lesson before entering the land of Israel. ©2015 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI ELIAKIM KOENIGSBERG

TorahWeb

Parshas Devorim is always read the Shabbos before Tisha B'Av. Many think it is because of the posuk "eicha esa l'vadi" which is read in the tune of Eicha. But there is also an important conceptual connection between the parsha and Tisha B'Av.

In his rebuke of Bnei Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu focuses much of his attention on the sin of the spies. At first glance, the sin of the spies lay in the fact that the spies and the people refused to trust that Hashem

would be able to keep his promise to take them into Eretz Yisrael and defeat the nations living there. But in this week's parsha the Torah adds another dimension to the story. In describing how the people asked him to send spies, Moshe says, "Va'tikrivun eilay kulchem -- and all of you approached me." Rashi comments, "kulchem, b'irbuvayah" -- the word kulchem implies they came as a mixed-up, confused throng of people. They didn't come in an organized fashion, with the leaders in front, followed by the elders, and then the younger people. Rather, everyone came together, as one mass, with each one pushing the other.

Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l explains that this demonstrated that the people felt under pressure. They felt a sense of urgency to send the spies, and they couldn't contain themselves, so they lost their composure. They didn't act with patience; they didn't present their case in a deliberate and measured way; they pushed.

This highlighted an even bigger problem -- the people felt that they had to take charge. It was up to them to prepare for the battles ahead, to take control of their situation. To be sure, this approach was not completely mistaken. After all, Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim with weapons (see Rashi, Shemos 13:18). In sefer Yehoshua, Bnei Yisrael fought many battles against the nations living in Eretz Yisrael. It's not as if Hashem wanted the people to sit back and let Him do all the work miraculously. Once Bnei Yisrael left the desert, they were expected to engage in hishtadlus, so that their success would come b'derech ha'teva. This is very much a part of a Torah way of life.

But the question is: who is running the show? Is it my intelligence, my insight, my effort, that enables me to accomplish? Or are my efforts just a vehicle to enable Hashem to bring me success? The difference is subtle, but critical. This was the underlying mistake of Bnei Yisrael. It wasn't the fact that they sent spies; it was the way they went about sending the spies. They lost perspective. They got carried away with themselves. They forgot that Hashem is the One who is really in control. They felt anxious and under pressure. So they pushed their way to Moshe to demand action.

"You cried an unnecessary cry; so I will establish a cry for generations" (Ta'anis 29a). Chazal tell us that the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash on Tisha B'Av was a response to the crying of Bnei Yisrael upon hearing the report of the spies. The loss of the Beis HaMikdash is not just a punishment for the sin of the spies, but is also the result of the same improper perspective that led to the sin in the first place. Since one of the middos of Hakadosh Boruch Hu is emes, and the Beis HaMikdash is the primary dwelling of the Shechina in this world, the Beis HaMikdash should naturally be a place where a person achieves absolute clarity in his perspective on life. In the shadow of the Beis HaMikdash all selfish motivations should

disappear. A person should appreciate that "life is not about me," and he should accept to serve Hashem as fully as possible.

And yet, during the first Beis HaMikdash, Klal Yisrael engaged in murder and immorality, both of which stem from a self-centered attitude. They served avodah zarah even in the Beis HaMikdash itself. What greater act of hubris against Hashem can there be! The second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of sinas chinam -- baseless hatred (Yoma9b). The Vilna Gaon writes (Even Shleimah 3:2) that the cause of sinas chinam is a lack of bitachon in Hakadosh Boruch Hu. A person who believes that he has to get ahead of others in order to succeed in life will naturally feel jealousy and hatred toward those he perceives as his competitors.

When Klal Yisrael fails to appreciate the gift of the Beis HaMikdash and engages in behavior that runs counter to everything the Beis HaMikdash stands for, if we get too wrapped up in ourselves and we forget the lesson of the spies, then Hakadosh Boruch Hu has no choice but to remove the Beis HaMikdash, to take extreme measures to help us regain the proper perspective.

May the day of Tisha B'Av give us the clarity of vision to serve Hashem properly, and in that merit may we see the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash speedily in our days. © 2015 Rabbi H. Schachter and TorahWeb.org

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"**Y**he First Temple was destroyed because of three things; idol worship, licentiousness and the spilling of blood (murder)." After providing proof-texts that these three sins were rampant during the (latter part of the) First Temple, the Talmud (Yoma 9b) asks why, if during the Second Temple we were involved in Torah, Mitzvos and doing kindness, the Temple was destroyed then too. The Talmud's answer? "Because there was unwarranted hatred."

In Netzach Yisroel (4), the Maharal explains why it was specifically these sins that brought about the destruction of the Temples. G-d's divine presence rested intensely on the First Temple, and the three sins committed during First Temple times bring about such ritual impurity (the Maharal brings proof-texts to show that this is the case) that it caused G-d's presence to leave. During the Second Temple, the divine presence was only minimally there, but the Temple served as a unifier, as it (and specifically the altar, since offerings were not allowed to be brought anywhere else) was the center (the "heart") of Jewish life. Therefore, when the nation's unity was shattered by the unwarranted hatred that was pervasive then, the Temple was destroyed.

As the Maharal himself points out (in chapter 5), unity didn't really exist during the First Temple either, as (for most of it) the nation was split into two

kingdoms. Therefore, G-d's divine presence resting on the Temple doesn't seem to be dependant on having such unity, and it was only the ritual impurity brought about by these three sins that caused it to depart. It was only during the Second Temple, when His divine presence was not as strong, that unity was necessary for the Temple to remain intact. [True, much of the nation remained in Babylon even after the Temple was rebuilt, but they were still part of one nation, with the Temple as its nucleus, until sectarianism brought about the unwarranted hatred that became pervasive even within the traditional community (see Netziv's introduction to B'reishis).]

Since the Third Temple, which we are anxiously awaiting, will include G-d's divine presence resting intensely on it, if such unity is not a prerequisite for this, it cannot be said that until we remove all hatred from within us the Temple cannot be rebuilt. [Not that we shouldn't strive for unity, nor should its importance be minimized. But unless the Third Temple must have the primary attributes of both Temples (G-d's divine presence and national unity), the fact that the Second Temple was destroyed because of unwarranted hatred would not automatically mean that all divisiveness must be eradicated before the Third Temple can be built. For my thoughts on how to attain unity, please see <https://rabbidmk.wordpress.com/2014/06/03/shavuos-5774/>. I had not seen this Maharal when I wrote that piece, but it fits very well with the notion of working to have G-d's divine presence rest upon us being the primary unifier.]

Nevertheless, the Talmud is very clear that unwarranted hatred would have destroyed the First Temple too, had it been present. Based on its previous statement that only the Second Temple was destroyed because of unwarranted hatred, the Talmud poses a question based on a verse in Yechezkel (21:17), which is obviously talking about First Temple times (because of when Yechezkel lived and prophesied) that is understood to refer to "people who eat and drink together but speak sharply to each other as if their tongues were swords." If such bickering existed (and it must not have been just an isolated instance, or it wouldn't have been discussed in a verse), unwarranted hatred must have been present in the First Temple too! Although the Talmud answers that the verse is only referring to the nobility, not the vast majority of people (so unwarranted hatred did not exist then as it did during the Second Temple), the working assumption, which was not disproven, is that had unwarranted hatred existed during the First Temple, it would have been reason enough for it to have been destroyed. [This is also implied by the Talmud equating unwarranted hatred and committing the "big three" sins (idol worship, licentiousness and murder) based on the Temples being destroyed by the two; if unwarranted hatred would not have caused the destruction of the

First Temple, there can be no comparison.]

It would therefore seem that having the nation divided into two kingdoms does not qualify as "unwarranted hatred." Based on the examples described by the Talmud (eating together yet fighting with each other, and the story of Kamtza/Bar Kamtza), the expression "unwarranted hatred" ("sinas chinam") seems to refer to people in the same social circles not getting along. If they are "eating and drinking together," they must live in the same community and have much in common, yet they still fight with each other. Kamtza and Bar Kamtza must have been in the same social circles, or the invitation to one couldn't have been confused as being intended for the other. Nor would Bar Kamtza have wanted so much to be at the party if it didn't include his circle of friends too.

The Maharal asks what Kamtza did wrong, for him to also be blamed for what happened; he didn't show up to the party because he didn't receive an invitation! He answers that Kamtza was blamed for being close friends with someone who had an enemy, which contributes to divisiveness. The issue seems to be that Kamtza tolerated people within his social circle not getting along. Having two separate groups is not the same as having separate cliques within the same group. The former might be unfortunate; the latter can bring about destruction.

There can be two totally separate kingdoms, yet G-d's divine presence will still dwell in the Temple. Sure, the leaders who caused such a division will be held accountable, but a division between people who live in different parts of the country, or who travel in different circles, or who remain separate because they have very different outlooks on life, is not considered "unwarranted hatred," and will not cause the Temple to be destroyed (or prevent it from being rebuilt). Rather, it is the infighting that took place within the same groups of people that qualified as being "unwarranted," and caused the Second Temple's destruction. I will not attempt to define what constitutes a "group" whose infighting can prevent the Temple from being rebuilt. What I will do, though, is suggest that we don't all have to be on the same page to be able to get along. Nor do we all have to be considered one group, thereby requiring that we resolve all of our differences. But we are required to work on our interpersonal skills, so that we can get along better with everyone, whether or not we are considered to be in the same group. ©2015 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Be'eros

Eleven days from Chorev, by way of Har Se'ir to Kadesh-barnea.

Be'er Yosef: We understand Chorev to be none other than Har Sinai. After all, notes the gemara (Shabbos 89B), this most important location went by

five different names. Why call Sinai "Chorev?" Because, offers the same gemara, ruin/ churvah descended to the nations on Sinai. The gemara does not tell us what about the giving of the Torah was particularly ruinous to the rest of the world.

We can find clues if we look elsewhere to see what Chazal consider to be particularly devastating. One place that comes to mind is the conversation a barren Soro has with her husband Avrohom. She persuades him to take her servant Hagar as a consort, in the hope that "I will build from her," (Bereishis 16:2) meaning that Hagar will have a child, and Soro will act as a surrogate parent. Rashi, citing a midrash, (Bereishis Rabbah 45:2) draws the inference: If Soro will only "build" by having a child, then it follows that one who has not built, i.e. has not produced a child, lives in a state of destruction or ruin.

Now, the commandment to have children appears early in Chumash, well before matan Torah. The gemara states an unambiguous principle regarding mitzvos that appear in Chumash before Klal Yisrael received the Torah. If a mitzvah is given prior to Sinai and not repeated after the Torah was given to Klal Yisrael, then only Jews are responsible to uphold it. If it is repeated after matan Torah, then it devolves upon both Jews and non-Jews/ bnei Noach.

The Torah does not repeat the "be fruitful and multiply" mitzvah after Sinai. Therefore, obligation in this mitzvah shifts to Jews alone. Whereas before Sinai, all of mankind was commanded to propagate the species, this is no longer true after the Torah was given.

Another way of looking at this is that having children became optional for non-Jews after the giving of the Torah. This can only mean that Hashem was prepared for the possibility that a group of people might vanish in time because they could not replenish themselves across the generations. Because of Sinai, the "ruin" of other nations was introduced. They could now treat parenting as an option in which they might or might not be interested. HKBH no longer had a strong interest in maintaining their populations. The possibility of their ruin had descended upon them at Sinai.

This line of reasoning helps explain why Har Sinai is called "Chorev" in our pasuk. The Torah goes on to place the beginning of Devarim at a point in time just after the wars with Sichon and Og. Those battles ushered in a policy of destruction of the seven nations that occupied the Land at the time. This, too, was a reflection of the new reality that took hold after Sinai, in which Divine interest waned in sustaining the populations of other nations. Some would come and go. The most evil of them would disappear in the short run, as the Bnei Yisrael would replace them within the borders of Israel.

The Torah hints here at the source of their harsh treatment. Having been offered the Torah and

spurning it, they had become expendable. Rejecting the Torah was tantamount to signing their own death warrants. Because of Sinai, their future was jeopardized. Their ruin had descended to them on that mountain, albeit by their own choosing. (Based on Be'er Yosef, Devarim 1:2) © 2015 Rabbi Y. Adlerstein & torah.org

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg

Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

"**T**he Holy One, Blessed be He, said: 'I said, And Yisrael dwelt in security, in solitude, like Yaacov' [Devarim 33:28]. Now let them dwell in a place alone." [Sanhedrin 104]. Yisrael is characterized by the trait, "G-d alone will guide them, and there will be no other god with him" [Devarim 32:12]. The Ramban discusses this at length in the Torah portion of Acharei Mot. The Holy One, Blessed be He, divided the various lands among different nations, and appointed an angel who was a governor for each one. And that is why G-d is called "the G-d of gods and the master of the masters," since He rules over all the governors. But with respect to the nation of Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael, "He did not appoint any governor from among the angels," and He leads them himself. As is written, "And I will be a G-d for you" [Yirmiyahu 11:14] -- there will be no other gods at all.

This trait of exclusive Divine guidance continues while we are in exile too, even though it might seem at first glance that when we are in exile G-d does not protect us in His tent of peace, and His guidance is not revealed. But it is still written, "How she sat alone" [Eicha 1:1] -- G-d alone will guide them.

"Who is standing behind our wall, looking from the windows, peeping through the crevices?" [Shir Hashirim 2:9]. It sometimes happens that a child will play outside of the home, while its mother leans on the windowsill and makes sure that nobody interferes with her son. However, at other times she might close the shutters and continue watching through the slits. From the mother's point of view nothing has changed, and she can see everything that she was able to see just as before, but those who are standing outside have the impression that the mother has left the scene and is no longer watching, and they can therefore take advantage of the situation and bother the child.

In the era of the Temple, the Holy One, Blessed be He, protects us from the open windows, and everybody can see Him. "And all the nations will see that the name of G-d is proclaimed over you, and they will fear you" [Devarim 28:10]. But when the shutters are closed, at a time when G-d is hidden, "And I will hide My face on that day" [31:18], when His face is not visible in the window, they get the impression that He is no longer there. However, in truth nothing has changed for us, and He sees and supervises just like before. Even

when we dwell alone, "G-d alone will watch over us."

There is even more to this. Specifically at the time when G-d is hidden, our awareness of His supervision grows stronger. When we look at the miracle of the survival of our nation, a sheep among seventy wolves, we can think of what Rabbi Yaacov Emden wrote in his Siddur:

"I swear that when I look at these wonders, they seem more remarkable than all of the miracles and wonders which G-da performed for our forefathers in Egypt, in the desert, and in Eretz Yisrael. And the longer the exile lasts, the more we are convinced by this miracle, and we become more and more aware of the power of His actions and His strength."

The Sefat Emet wrote with respect to Tisha B'Av which is on Shabbat that in general the purpose of Shabbat is to show that the nation of Yisrael is under the protection of the Holy One, Blessed be He. "It is an eternal sign between me and the Children of Yisrael" [Shemot 31:17]. And the unique supervision of Yisrael continues even during a time of exile. Therefore, when the Ninth of Av is on Shabbat we do not fast, because the fast would be a sign of mourning for the Temple, as if to imply that G-d is no longer watching over us. However, on Shabbat we are not alone, and there is no need to fast.



The Clear Vision Of Rav Kook The Day the Sun was Extinguished

by Rabbi Chagai Londin

Hesder Yeshiva in Sdeirot and Machon Meir

The destruction of the Temple was not just a local tragedy, the ruin of a magnificent synagogue. The day of the destruction of the Temple marks for Judaism the day when the world changed. It is the day that the sun was extinguished.

During the time of the First Temple, life and holiness were linked together in a natural way, and a person could "flow" within the physical world without any fear. During the time of King Shlomo, which is considered the "golden age" of the First Temple Era, the Tanach gives us amazing descriptions of a powerful life: "And behold, Shlomo's bread for one day was made from thirty measures of fine flour and sixty measures of flour" [Melachim I 5:2]. "Silver was not considered valuable at all in the days of Shlomo" [10:21]. The descriptions give a feeling of remarkable powers of life -- an army, the economy, art, and esthetics. Chapter after chapter are devoted to the fine details of the magnificent architectures of the Palace and of the Temple, Shlomo's army, his merchants, and his stables. The characteristic description was the following: "Yehuda and Yisrael were as numerous as the sand at the sea, spending their time eating and drinking... as numerous as the sand at the sea -- eating, drinking, and being happy." [4:20]. Sanctity

appears intertwined with the secular, and the secular is an expression of holiness.

However, all of this stopped with the end of the First Temple. During the destruction, "an iron fence was created between Yisrael and their Father in Heaven" [Berachot 32b]. "From the day that the Temple was destroyed there was no day that was not cursed, the dew was not the source of any blessing, and the fruits had no taste" [Sotta 48a]. In other words, when this happened, life lost its vitality. We entered an era where there was a constant war between the secular and the holy, between the physical and the spiritual. This struggle continues to this day. The spiritual world, which in the time of the Temple was tangible and intertwined with the physical one, became nebulous and full of doubts, and physical reality became the only aspect of life which was considered to be a real dimension.

Deep analysis shows us that all the tribulations in the world today -- the struggle between various forces which in the end leads to large-scale wars, tensions, and crises in all dimensions, for both individuals and a community -- stem solely from a lack of balance between the spiritual and the physical worlds. This balance was lost when the Temple was destroyed.

The Ninth of Av is indeed the saddest day of the year. It is a day when we do not eat, we do not drink, and we observe the customs of mourning. The sages even forbid us from studying anything in the Torah that is not directly connected to the subject of the destruction (this is based on the assumption that other subjects in Torah learning can make us feel happy). On the Ninth of Av we even put limits on our regular prayers. This all has a single purpose: to keep in mind and to internalize that the world in which we live is a world that lacks something. As soon as we can understand what is missing, the possibility opens up for us to get on the right track to recover that which we have lost. And indeed quite a bit has been lost. (Summarized by Yisrael Rosenberg) ©2015 Machon Zomet. Translated by Moshe Goldberg

