



Insights and Inspiration

Rabbi Ephraim Schwartz

"Your friend in Karmiel"



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Parshat Va'Eschanan/ Nachamu

The Last Tisha B'Av

I'm writing this on Tisha B'Av. It's a different Tisha B'Av for me this year. I really, really, really am hoping there's a shofar that sounds before I finish the end of this E-Mail. It's not just because I could use a coffee right now either. Although, it would be nice. And that's even after a week of doing decaf. Everyone has their preparations. Mine is decaf. But it's not working.

Rather, this year Tisha B'Av instead of the usual *lashon harah*, *sinas chinam*, Chafetz Chaim, loving everyone videos that I'm really sick of already. Nor was it the sad holocaust stuff. It wasn't even Nova, Gaza Hostage stuff- which is the new holocaust. Who remembers the old days when the only thing to watch was Entebbee videos? The good ol' days. Today it's just same old, same old. This year, there were quite a few different ones with a different theme, that I don't think I've ever experienced on a Tisha B'Av before. There was the OU one with Jen Airley, mother of Binyamin a soldier who was killed Hy"d, visiting people that were actually making things for the Bais HaMikdash. Getting Red Heifers, learning and practicing *Korbanos*, making the *lechem hapanim*-show bread, carving doors and weaving curtains, and chiseling stones. I was blown away. I felt Mashiach coming. Klal Yisrael was making the moves and truly taking action to prepare and herald in the *geulah* in ways I believe the Chafetz Chaim and others only dreamed of.

But what about the Temple Mount? The ugly pimple desecrating it. How can we do that? For that Reb Michoel Weichboard's Homebound video with yeshivish looking guys on it explained how the Har Ha'Bayis people going up and davening there thing is happening. Not only happening, but it's changing the

face of the Temple Mount in the same ways that Hill Tops settlements are changing the make-up and Jewish conquest of Eretz Yisrael in the West Bank. Arabs are staying away from the Temple Mount as more Jews go up there. That's cool! Ten years ago there were 400 people that went up on Tisha B'Av and they couldn't daven or certainly not bow down. This year there were 3500. That's a real number.

Now personally I don't go up there. Let's get that straight. Most of the Gedolim and Rabbis that I follow- blindly. Or actually not blindly. Rather biblically. Meaning, that I understand, that as much as it seems clear to me that there's really no *kareis* obligation in the places that they go. I mean think about it. The only place which one needs the Red Heifer for is the *Heichal* and that's nowhere near the place they walk which is the Azara at best which requires mere Mikva dipping. That area is 28 football fields with their end zones, while the *heichal* isn't even the size of one. No one's heading into Kareis territory. And we pretty much know that the *heichal* is by the Golden Pimple. Yet, even that being the case. The Rabbis say don't and the Torah says listen to them. So I do. It's why I don't wear *techeiles* either. I'm a traditionalist- at least to a degree.

Yet, the fact that they are going and that Rabbis with beards, that have their Rabbis that tell them to go and to see people bowing, to see them talking about the place of the *mizbayach*. To the talk of the Chief Rabbi of Tzfat Rav Shmuel Eliyahu of starting yeshivas there, of slowly getting rid of the desecration pro-actively. Conversations like this haven't ever happened since our exile. It filled me with hope and a true feeling that it's happening. That

the *geula* is coming closer and closer and our building will be there soon. Hashem's building.

The truth is the establishment of the State was as well the beginning of the process that I don't think most Rabbis and most of *klal* Yisrael and certainly not the secular founders ever dreamed would look like what it does today. Tens if not hundreds of thousands of frum Jews. Of Olim that keep Torah and Mitzvos. Of luxury style living houses. Of Kollels and Torah like never before. It all started back then 75 years ago when most Jews thought it was something amazing and cool, yet it took many decades until today where it's become mainstream. Where more and more Jews are coming home. Where the largest population of Jews is here. Where, like the Temple Mount, and the work being done to build the Bais HaMikdash it was a pipe dream that was halachically and perhaps even mentally borderline outsiders that took part of. It was only the looneys that made Aliya back then. Yet, today it's a reality for most.

The truth of the matter the same is true with the Israeli army these days. Whereas once you wouldn't catch any self-respecting chareidi young man in an IDF uniform. Forget about tzitzis and *payos*. Today there's probably more tzitzis and *payos* that are even being worn by "*chiloni*" soldiers, than frum. Yet as well it started with the handful. It started with *gezeiros*. It started with staunch opposition from the Rabbis and which there still is. Yet, somehow Hakadosh Baruch is pushing things in His direction. He's taking these outliers and perhaps non-mainstream people to do the work that He wants done, while at the same time perhaps maintaining the status quo in other places, until He's ready for them to join. Or not...

It's not just today either. Think about the fights between the Chasidim and *Mitnagdim*. Between the Mussar Movement and the anti-that. Between Beis Shammai and Bais Hillel? Ok that's a bit too much perhaps. But back then in all of those fights and truly deeply held halachic and *hashkafic* positions were brutal. Rabbis thrown in jail. Sent to Siberia. Yeshivos and shuls thrown out of communities. It was tough and makes our dumb demonstrations seem like children's playground "he-stole-my-ball" spats. Yet today, they're all on the same page. Litvaks learn Chasidus and go to Uman, and *chasidim* learn Reb

Chayim's and go to Miami... Just joking. I meant Lakewood.

So what's the point of this? Why is my Tisha B'Av and yours different this year? What does this mean on a practical basis? Let's take a tour to the last Tisha B'Av we had in the midbar. Or more precisely the last one before we came into the Land of Israel, before that first redemption was finally realized. When that fifth cup of *Vi'Heveisi*- and I will bring you to the land took place forty years to the day from when we left Egypt.

So for 38 years, the Talmud in the end of Taanis tells us the Jews had a special custom. Presumably they took showers and listened to music that was non-acapella for the three weeks preceding and they even took their laundry to the local *Ananei H'aKavod* laundry mat. After-all the three weeks thing doesn't start for another thousand or two thousand years or so at least. Yet, they did have a minhag on each Tisha B'Av. Each year they would have all of the men 20-60 dig a grave and then go to sleep in it. Nice. See, there were 600,000 or so that needed to die in those 40 years. Every year, another 15,000 never got out of those graves. They stayed there. Their bones are still waiting to come home. It's what happens to Jews that don't want to come to Israel when Hashem tells us to.

Now, I'm not exactly sure how one sleeps in a grave. It can't be too comfortable, worse than your typical Israeli mattress for sure. Can you imagine that scene each Tisha B'Av. Hugging your family, your children, saying *shema*. The teshuva they must have done. The regret for their *lashon harah* and needless crying about a Land Hashem told them was good. How do you sleep? Yet the gemara tells us they slept. That's strange.

Even more than that was the next morning. The morning of Tisha B'Av. An alarm clock called out, they got a message on their phones. Maybe it was a siren or a shofar.

"Whoever is alive, separate yourselves from the dead'. *And all who had the spirit of life in them came out*"

Can you imagine the Modeh Ani, that morning? The hugging, the kissing, the new lease on life that each person got and experienced. It must have been

awesome. It's like someone who survives an open-heart surgery, or has cancer removed and gets a clean bill of health. It's like peeking into Hashem's books Motzai Yom Kippur and seeing that you have been written in the "Life" Book. How many people had to *bentch gomel* that morning? You can imagine the singing, dancing and the festive reunions. And of course the nice Welcome home Abba steak BBQ parties that took place that night.

Except of course for the unfortunate 15,000 that died. Their houses were mourning. Were crying. Because their Abba never stepped out of the grave. They instead spent the day taking that dirt that he had dug out and buried him. In the *midbar*. Far from the land that they were heading to and that he was foolish and sinful enough to reject.

Now that was true for the first 39 years. Each year, there were less and less graves. Most were gone. Most had died. Whereas in the first few years 5% or 10% came out and there were more post burial parties then funerals, that changed. As more died, there were less parties and more funerals. Less *gomels* each year. Last year it was 50/50. This final year, there were only 15,000 left. Hashem had told them it was 40-year sentence and here we are in the final year. The last Tisha B'Av.

There wasn't a dry eye or a hope that they wouldn't come out. They knew the game was over. Their luck had run out. Nobody went shopping for any reunion parties. Everyone took showers and prepared shiva chairs for the next morning. Nobody wanted to get out of bed to go hear that call the next morning. And yet they couldn't stay away. And lo and behold. They all came out. It was a miracle. They were alive. The Geula was here. They were basically told by Hashem they could come into the land. Can you imagine the celebration? The party. The Simcha. Har Ha'Bayis was now *Bi'Yadam...* Am Yisrael Chai.

Except, they didn't believe it. It was a mistake. It's not time yet. We must have made a mistake. So what did they do? They climbed right back into the graves and buried themselves. They stuck their heads in the literal desert sand and didn't believe it was here. We're supposed to die in the *midbar*. We can't really be redeemed. It can't be true. It's *osur* for us to go into the land. And so they went back in to their graves to die in the *midbar*.

But guess what. They come out again alive. It was another miracle. They saw Jews returning to Eretz Yisrael. They saw missiles falling on Bnai Brak where you can't even find a parking spot. They saw crops growing in land that was desolate. They saw children dancing and playing in the streets of Yerushalayim. They saw soldiers with *payos* and Mashiach patches. And they say said. It's not the redemption. We still need to go to sleep in our graves. I switched subjects and contexts there in case you didn't notice...

They did this night after night. Miracle after miracle. They did this the tenth of Av, the 11th, this Shabbos. They did this for a whole week straight. They did this until the 15th of Av- Tu B'Av when at that point in time it became incontrovertible. It was undeniable. They saw the full moon and in the words of Rashi in the Gemara there.

"*Rau ki cheshbon chadash michuvan*"- that there is a new accounting going on. There's a new *cheshbon*. It's not their *cheshbon*. It's Hashem's plan. And as He tells us *lo machsivosai machshivoseichem*. My ways and thoughts are not like yours are. We think differently mortal and immortal. Infinite and finite. Master and servant. Don't try to figure me out. Certainly don't tell Me what I'm telling and showing you that it isn't real. Realize that the *geula* is already here. Stop hiding in your pathetic graves.

It's an amazing thing we're experiencing. We're in the "40th" year before we're about to experience the *geula*. Hashem is showing us miracles. He's calling us home. He's shofaring to everyone with the spirit of life within himself to separate themselves from the dead and rise up. Make Aliyah. And yet, we say it's not real. We're burying ourselves again and again in our graves. We don't realize the *cheshbon chadash* has started. That the Temple Mount is returning to our hands. To frum hands, not secular ones that gave it back. That the army of Israel is becoming Torahdik. Where "*Hoshiya es amecha*" is the song being sung, not *kochi v'otzem yadi*. Where *yidden* are starting to prepare reunion parties already with the *shechina*. And yet so many of us, are still more comfortable in those warm graves, and saying it's not time yet.

We always read parshas Va'eschanan on Shabbos Nachamu. It begins with Moshe asking Hashem 515

if he can come into the land. Hashem told him it's not for you. You can't. Moshe asks again. Hashem says no. Moshe asks again. And again Hashem says, I have a purpose for you there. You have to be against Baal Pe'or. You have to have Adirei Torah. You have to raise up sparks there. It's not for you. Stay in galus. And Moshe asks again. And again and again. Because he doesn't want to take no for answer. Because he's full of Geula energy. Because he wants so much to even be a bird that flies into the land. A Israeli cockroach that scrounges through garbage. Because he knows that closer to Hashem and better for him and for the world, if he comes in. So he keeps asking. He doesn't want to sleep in a grave. He asks until Hashem tells him to stop asking. That's when the game is up.

So many people tell me. Our rabbis don't tell us to move here. Most of them have never even asked their Rabbi the *shayla*. Because they prefer their graves and frankly don't want to move. Chafetz Chaim heritage Lashon Harah videos and *kumzitzes* singing "*Im Eshkoecheich*" are so inspirational and moving. And you get to have meat-boards with them and not deal with rude Israelis either. Forget about joining the army. Yet there are some that actually do ask. Once. Maybe twice. But that's it. It's like asking the Rav if your chicken is kosher or your wife is *mutar* and then running out before he changes his mind. Got my *psak*. My get out of *Gehenom* free card if Hashem asks me after 120 years. I'm good to go. That's called

burying your head in a grave and not getting out of it. That's not being Moshe Rabbeinu and asking 515 times if he can move here.

Trust me if you asked your Rav in America, even in Lakewood, 15 times, even he would tell you to move already. Because he sees, that you can't stay there anymore. He sees that it doesn't work for you anymore. He understands what your soul is telling you. That it is in touch with the *Shechina* paging you. He hears the call that you hear that anyone that has *nefesh chayim* should step out of the grave and separate himself from the dead.

It's the last Tisha B'av in the *midbar*. The *Har Ha'Bayis* is almost in our hands. May this year Tu B'Av, this coming week, may all of *klal* Yisrael finally realize *cheshbon chadash michuvan*- there is a new accounting here. And may we all join all of the *meisei midbar* who have returned to life here in *Yerushalayim Ha'Benuyah*.

Have a consoling and geula revealed Shabbos Nachamu and an awesome Bein Hazmanim, Rabbi Ephraim Schwartz

*This week's Insights and Inspiration is dedicated one again by my dear dear friends (every sponsorship gets you another dear 😊) Tzipi and Ephraim Book, as zechus for shmira for all our holy Chayalim, and for all of Eretz Yisrael. May Hashem give us and them the strength to finally liberate our country and build the Bais HaMikdash with the Geula Shlaima!
Thank You!*

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