

Mourning for Millenia: Comparing Personal and National Tragedies

Rabbanit Dr. Tamara Spitz

1. Moed Katan 27b:15

The Sages taught in a *baraita* with regard to the verse that states: **“Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him”** (Jeremiah 22:10): **“Weep not for the dead”** is referring to **excessive** mourning; **“neither bemoan him” more than the appropriate measure** of time. **How so?** What is the appropriate measure? **Three days for weeping, and seven for eulogizing, and thirty** for the prohibition against **ironing** clothing **and for the prohibition against cutting hair.** **From this point forward the Holy One, Blessed be He, says: Do not be more merciful with the deceased than I am.** If the Torah commands one to mourn for a certain period of time, then that suffices.

2. Mishneh Torah, Mourning

13:10-11

One does not cry for the dead for more than three days, and he is not eulogized for more than seven days... One should not grieve too much

מועד קטן כ"ז ב:ט"ו

אל תבכו לַמֵּת וְאֵל תִּנּוּדוּ לוֹ אֶל תִּבְכוּ לַמֵּת יוֹתֵר מִדָּאִי וְאֵל תִּנּוּדוּ לוֹ יוֹתֵר מִכְּשִׁיעוֹר הָאֵל כִּי צַד שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְבָכִי וְשִׁבְעָה לְהַסְפֵּד וְשְׁלֹשִׁים לְגִיהוּץ וּלְתַסְפוֹרַת מִכָּאן וְאֵילָף אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֵי אַתֶּם רַחֲמָנִים בּוֹ יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי

משנה תורה, הלכות אבל י"ג:י-י"א

אין בוכין על המת יותר משלשה ימים. ואין מספידין יותר משבועה... אל תקשה אדם על מתו יותר מדאי. שְׁנַאֲמַר (ירמיה כב י) "אל תבכו לַמֵּת וְאֵל תִּנּוּדוּ לוֹ". כְּלוּמַר יֵתֵר מִדָּאִי שֶׁהוּא מְנַהֵגוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם. וְהַמְצַעֵר

over his deceased relative, as it is written : "Weep not for him who is dead, wail not over him" (Jeremiah 22:10); that is, weep not for him too much, since this is the way of the world. He who grieves too much over what is bound to happen is a fool. What measure of mourning should one follow? Three days for weeping, seven for lamenting, thirty days for abstaining from a haircut, and the rest of the five things.

3. Psalms 137:5-6

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither; let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour.

4. Genesis 37:35

(35) All his sons and daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, saying, "No, I will go down mourning to my son in Sheol." Thus his father bewailed him.

5. Tractate Soferim 21:9

It was taught: What did our father Jacob do when his sons brought him the coat [stained] with blood? He did not believe them at all. Whence do we infer this? For it is written, *But he refused to be comforted*, because no

[עצמו יותר] על מנהגו של עולם הרי זה טפוש. אלא כיצד יעשה. שלשה לבכי. שבועה להספד. שלשים יום לתספורת ולשאר החמשה דברים:

תהילים קל"ז:ה-ו

אם־אשכחך ירושלם תשכח ימיני.
תדבק־לשוני | לחכי־אם־לא אֶזְכְּרְךָ
אם־לא אֶעֱלֶה אֶת־ירוּשָׁלַם עַל־רֹאשׁ
שִׁמְחָתִי:

בראשית ל"ז:ל"ה

(לה) וַיִּקְרְמוּ כָל־בְּנָיו וְכָל־בְּנוֹתָיו לְנַחֲמוֹ
וַיִּמְאֵן לְהִתְנַחֵם וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־אֶרְדָּ אֶל־בְּנֵי אָבִי
שָׂאֵלָה וַיִּבְרַךְ אֹתָם אָבִיו:

מסכת סופרים כ"א:ט'

תני מה עשה יעקב אבינו כשהביאו בניו את הכתונת בדם לא האמין להן כל עיקר מנין דכתיב (בראשית ל"ז:ל"ה) וימאן להתנחם לפי שאין מקבלין תנחומין על חי

consolations are acceptable for a living person.

6. Yerushalmi, Yoma 1a

Any generation in which the Temple is not built, it is as if it had been destroyed in their times

7. Isaiah 22:4

(4) That is why I say, "Let me be, I will weep bitterly. Press not to comfort me For the ruin of my poor people."

ישעיהו כ"ב:ד'

(ד) עַל־כֵּן אָמַרְתִּי שְׁעוּ מִנִּי אֲמַרְר בְּבִכִי
אֶל־תֵּאִיצוּ לְנַחֲמֵנִי עַל־שֹׁד בַּת־עַמִּי:

8. Isaiah 22:12

(12) My Lord GOD of Hosts summoned on that day To weeping and lamenting, To tonsuring and girding with sackcloth.

ישעיהו כ"ב:י"ב

(יב) וַיִּקְרָא אֲדוֹשֵׁם ה' צְבָאוֹת בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
לְבִכִי וּלְמִסְפָּד וּלְקִרְחָה וּלְחִגְרַת שֵׁק:

9. Berakhot 3a

Rav Yitzhak bar Shmuel said in the name of Rav: The night consists of three watches, and over each and every watch the Holy One, Blessed be He sits and roars like a lion, because the Temple service was connected to the changing of these watches (*Tosefot HaRosh*), **and says: "Woe to Me, that due to their sins I destroyed My house, burned My Temple and exiled them among the nations of the world."**

ברכות ג' א

אָמַר רַב יִצְחָק בַּר שְׁמוּאֵל מִשְׁמֵיהּ דְּרַב:
שְׁלֵשׁ מְשָׁרוֹת הוּא הַלַּיְלָה, וְעַל כָּל מְשָׁמַר
וּמְשָׁמַר יוֹשֵׁב הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְשׂוֹאֵג
כְּאַרִי, וְאוֹמֵר: "אוֹי לִי שֶׁבְּעוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם
הִחַרְבְּתִי אֶת בֵּיתִי וְשָׂרַפְתִּי אֶת הַיְכָלִי
וְהִגְלִיתִים לְבֵין אֻמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם."

10. Maharal, Netzach Yisrael, ch. 203

"... Where there is mourning for Jerusalem, by that we show that there is some loss and deficiency in the world. For this reason the order is repeated in the Tanakh: 'Rejoice with her, all those who mourn over her' - this refers to those who mourn over her because of the deficiency which came to this world, for that they mourn... But if they do not mourn, as though there were no deficiency, then since there is no deficiency then there will also be no return... Therefore a person is obligated to mourn over the destruction of the Temple, and must cry and weep for our destruction and must pray that the Temple be rebuilt. And if a person does not do this, it is as if he is the reason for the destruction, as we learn in the Yerushalmi: 'The early generations shifted the foundations and the later ones destroyed them' - why is this so? Because the later generations failed to repent. This means the following: The early generations, because of whose sins the Temple was destroyed, represent just the "shifting of the foundations," but the later generations, who did not repent, represent uprooting from the very source. Why? Because the later generations saw before them the destroyed Temple and made no effort to repent and thereby restore the Temple. This can only mean that they did not desire to have the Temple restored, since they had tangible proof of the deficiency and they did not repent to repair the situation.

11. Rav Yehuda Shaviv, From Mourning to Comfort

From our first exile we learned that only when Bnei Yisrael cried out to God from their labor did God reveal Himself to Moshe and send him to save the nation from the Egyptian bondage. This idea may underlie the legend which describes Mashiach as being born on Tisha Be-av. It teaches us that it is in the very depths of our feelings of pain over the exile and destruction that the seeds of the future redemption are sowed.

12. Eichah Rabbah 1:1

Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Nechemya [disagree]. Rabbi **Yehuda** says: The term *eikha* denotes rebuke. As it is stated (*Yirmiyahu* 8:8): How (*eikha*) can you say, We are wise, and the Torah of the Lord is with us, etc.

איכה רבה א:א'

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה וְרַבִּי נְחֵמְיָהּ, רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר
 אֵין לְשׁוֹן אֵיכָה אֶלָּא לְשׁוֹן תּוֹכְחָה, הִדָּא מָה
 דְּאֵתְ אָמַר (יִרְמִיָּהּ ח, ח): אֵיכָה תֵּאמְרוּ
 חֲכָמִים אֲנַחְנוּ וְתוֹרַת ה' אֵתְנוּ וְגו'. וְרַבִּי
 נְחֵמְיָהּ אָמַר אֵין לְשׁוֹן אֵיכָה אֶלָּא קִינָה,
 הִדָּא מָה דְּאֵתְ אָמַר (בְּרַאשִׁית ג, ט): וַיִּקְרָא

And Rabbi **Nechemya** says: The term *eikha* denotes lamentation. As it is stated (*Genesis 3:9*): And the Lord called to the man, and said to him, Where are you (*ayeka*) woe to you (*oy lekha*).

And when was the *megilla* of lamentations said:

Rabbi **Yehuda** said: In the days of Yehoyakim. Rabbi **Nechemya** said to him: Does one weep over the deceased before he dies? Rather when was it said? Following the destruction of the Temple. This is the solution: How does the city sit solitary (*Eikha 1:1*).

ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶל הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אַיֶּכָּה, אוֹי לְכָה.
וְאִמְתִּי נְאֻמָּה מְגִלַת קִינּוּת, רַבִּי יְהוּדָה
אוֹמֵר בְּיָמֵי יְהוֹיָקִים נְאֻמָּה, אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי
נְחֻמְיָה וְכִי בּוֹכִין עַל הַמָּת עַד שְׁלֹא מוֹת,
אֲלֹא אִמְתִּי נְאֻמָּה אַחַר חֲרִבּוֹ הַבַּיִת, הֲרִי
פְתָרוֹנוֹ: אַיֶּכָּה יִשְׁבָּה בְדָד.

13. Rav Moshe Lichtenstein, Repentance or Wailing?

To understand the disagreement, we must appreciate the tremendous gap between the two concepts proposed here: rebuke and lamentation. Rebuke is designed to point out a person's errors, to explain to him the difference between right and wrong, to cause him to repent and to bring him to appropriate conduct. The prophets rebuked Israel so that they would mend their ways, and every Jew is commanded to rebuke his fellow Jew. We see then that the operative concept that underlies rebuke is that of repentance. Its basic outlook is optimistic, for it assumes that man is capable of change and of renouncing his sins in the here and now.

A lamentation, on the other hand, is fundamentally pessimistic. It does not come to lead a person to repent, but to weep with him over his bitter fate and lament about it. It is based upon weeping and despair in the face of a situation that cannot be fixed or improved. The sins of the past are etched in stone and all that can be done now is emphasize and feel the magnitude of the lost opportunity and to wail the ruin and destruction. The fundamental concept underlying lamentation is not repentance, but mourning.

14. Exodus 25:8

(8) And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

15. Birkat Asher on Torah,

Exodus 25:1:3

To this idea of building the Mishkan in the heart of man is dedicated the song "I will build a Mishkan in my heart" which was edited by Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner ztl, author of the Pachad Yitzchak. And here are the words of the song: "I will build a Mishkan in my heart to glorify His honor, and I will place an altar in the Mishkan to honor Him. I will have a constant fire with me, the fire of Aqedah, and I will sacrifice my soul to Him- my only soul. " The source of this song is from Sefer HaCharedim by Rebbi Eliezer Azkari, the Kabbalist and poet who lived in Tzefat 500 years ago. In the 7th chapter, there is a poem called "the Song of Friendship" arranged in the order of the "Alpha Beta ", and in letters B and E it is stated there: " I will build a Mishkan in my heart for His splendor. My fats and blood I will sacrifice - on his altar and I will worship Him. "

16. Rav Pinchas Stolper, Living Beyond Time

We may not yet all live in Jerusalem, but Jerusalem lives in us. Our challenge is

שמות כ"ה:ח'

(ח) וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם:

ברכת אשר על התורה, שמות כ"ה:א':ג'

לרעיון זה של בנין המשכן בלב האדם מוקדש השיר "בלבבי משכן אבנה" אותו ערך הרב יצחק הוטנר זצ"ל בעל "פחד יצחק", ואלו מלות השיר: "בלבבי משכן אבנה להדר כבודו, ובמשכן מזבח אשים לקרני הודו. ולנר תמיד אקח לי את אש העקדה, ולקרבת אקריב לו את נפשי - את נפשי היחידה". מקורו של השיר ב"ספר חרדים" של רבי אליעזר אזכרי, המקובל והפייטן שחי בצפת לפני קרוב לחמש מאות שנה. שם בפרק ז ישנו שיר הנקרא "שיר ידידות" המסודר על סדר "אלפא ביתא", ובאותיות ב' ו'ה' נאמר שם: "בתוך לבבי משכן אבנה לזיוו, קרבן אקריב לו - נפשי היחידה. החלב והדם שלי אקריבה - על מזבחו ועבוד עבודה".

to expand the Jerusalem in us so that Jerusalem and its rebuilt Temple will become the spiritual center for all Jews and for all mankind.

17. Rav Josef B. Soloveitchik, Avelut Yeshanah and Avelut Hadashah: Historical and Individual Mourning

In individual mourning, betrothal is forbidden. Man, vanquished by death, suffers self-degradation. There is no use in continuing the struggle, and he submits himself to his cruel fate. But it is permissible to betroth on Tish'ah be-Av. The whole dimension of despair and resignation, the notion of the mourner being unworthy of his own existential experience, sitting like a leper on a heap of ashes, bankrupt and forlorn, is contrary to the very gist of avelut de-rabbim [communal mourning]. There, the mourner is not the individual but the nation, the covenantal community, which must never lose hope or faith. No matter how difficult times are, no matter how great the loss is, however dreary and bleak the present seems, the future shines with a brilliant glow full of promise. The messianic hope has never vanished; the people have never been enveloped by the dark night of despair. While the Temple was being consumed by the purple flames of destruction, R. Yohanan ben Zakkai was already planning the future redemption. He introduced takkanot zekher la-mikdash, ritual reminders that although we have lost a Temple built by human hands, we will instead find a sanctuary constructed by the Divine hand...

Nehamah, consolation, is intertwined in the texture of avelut de-rabbim [communal mourning]. There the whole method of manifesting despair is out of context and contradicts the very essence of avelut derabbim, which is a dialectical moving between grief and hope, darkness and a dazzling light, spiritual emptiness and a transcendent vision, bleak autumn and a glowing summer.