B”H, 6 Av 5778
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**Tisha B’Av and the Holocaust**

The Sages of the Talmud ruled that when Tisha B’Av falls on Shabbat, as it does this year, it is postponed to Sunday. “He sets a table (on Shabbat) even like the feast of King Solomon in his time.” This is a strange declaration, as it would have been perfectly possible simply to state that it is permitted to eat normally. Moreover, we do observe private mourning customs on this Shabbat. To this we should add a principled question concerning another ruling of the Sages that all those who mourn for Jerusalem merit seeing it in its joy. Is this truly the case? After all, many fine people did not merit and do not merit to see it in its joy, despite their mourning. The Sages further ruled that already on the day of destruction, the light of Messiah was born. They found proof for this in the adjacent verses “Lebanon (the Temple) shall fall by a mighty one” and “and there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse (Messiah).”

Accordingly, we may understand that those who truly and sincerely mourn for Jerusalem merit to see the light – the emerging light of redemption that is the city’s joy, just as on Shabbat people merit to see a special light. Even though it is the ninth of Av, they see the light of approaching redemption, and so it is indeed appropriate that they eat a feast similar to that of King Solomon.

During the Holocaust, in the midst of the great destruction and during the period of “enlightenment” and estrangement even from nations other than the Germans, there were already sparks of light, the strength of redemption. These sparks, in the form of the mental and spiritual strengths that emerged from the greater part of those living in the ghettoes and camps, as well as the Jewish identity, morality, and values manifested from within the terrible chaos, were already an expression of the future redemption. Viktor Frankl, the Holocaust survivor and renowned psychiatrist, has already explained his approach, emphasizing that he saw in the mere recognition of “the meaning of life” the sparks of redemption – personal survival.

Many of the survivors, and certainly we ourselves – unlike the destruction of the Temple – merited to see after an interval of just three years a strong spark of redemption in the form of the establishment of the State of Israel.

Even as we engage in mourning for the destruction of the Temple and for the destruction of the Holocaust, we must also locate and notice the forces and sparks of redemption, so that we may inculcate all these together to the coming generations: inculcating devastation and destruction along with the Jewish recognition of the meaning of life.

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