

Dvar Torah for Tisha b'Av (The Ninth of Av) Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Matanah 5:38*

There is no such thing as despair.

It may sound absurd, but we're pretty lucky to be in exile. After all, our great-grand-zeidehs and great-grand-bubbies who were driven out of the Land and into exile had no clue how to survive. We at least have a precedent. We've seen how it's done. They had no clue of what was going to be - what would really become of all of Hashem's (God's) promises to keep us alive, so that we would fulfill our mission. For close to 2000 years we have seen how Hashem keeps us alive - a lamb among 70 wolves (*Esther Rabbah* 10:11) - and based on that, if nothing else, we believe that He will keep us around to fulfill our mission.

Exile, however, seems to be a peculiar state. If a people who are brothers and sisters are so unfeeling to one another, and so inconsiderate of the laws and wisdom of their ancestors, why tolerate their existence? And if, despite the depravity of their misdoings, they are still protected and maintained, why not bring them back home and let them do what they please?

If we expected God to treat us with unbounded and unearned kindness, as He is certainly capable of doing, we would do nothing. There would be no demands upon us and we would have no incentive to improve our already "perfect" lot. On the other hand, if we expected that we had to be perfect, that we could make absolutely no mistakes and that any flaw in a mitzvah would render it worthless, we would also do nothing. The burden would be so great that it would be soon cast off.

Hashem is simultaneously demanding and forgiving. We must try to behave as He commands, doing what He tells us to do on one hand and exercising self-control to curb our appetites on the other. He knows that sometimes we will fail despite our best efforts to succeed. He knows that sometimes we will purposely and willfully defy Him. Hashem knows - even though we don't - how damaging our failures and rebellious folly are.

When our eyes are open and we catch a glimpse of the suffering our misdeeds have led to - nearly 2000 years of discrimination, poverty, torture and death - we might very well give up hope. **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS DESPAIR!**

Tisha b'Av is not only the day the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed. It is the day that the Moshiach is born. When we sit on the floor and cry about the pain we and God have suffered because of our lapses, we are doing so because we believe in Hashem's infinite kindness. We know in our heart of hearts that **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS DESPAIR!** Following this awful exile will be the most wonderful redemption, very soon, in our lifetime. Amen.

May you have an easy and meaningful fast.

agutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

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