

Dvar Torah for Tisha b'Av

Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Birkhot Reiyah 4:7*

Tisha b'Av (Ninth of Av) descends upon us shortly. Its exterior is black; no eating or drinking, no wearing of leather shoes, no sexual activity, sitting on the floor till mid-day. Even tallit and tefillin are delayed till the afternoon.

The externals of Tisha b'Av and Yom Kippur are almost 100% identical. Yet, Yom Kippur is a day we rejoice, while Tisha b'Av is a day we mourn.

When the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple) stood, it was the focus of Yom Kippur. The *kohein gadol* (high priest) performed the service, which included entering the inner sanctum of the Beit HaMikdash, the Most Holy, the holiest spot on earth. Through the *kohein gadol's* service, even the most ordinary Jew, even the most thoroughly backsliding Jew, was able to draw the *kedushah* (sanctity) of the Beit HaMikdash to wherever he was, by his fasting. This *kedushah* was not limited to spatial holiness as manifested by the Beit HaMikdash. It included the holiness of person and time as well, as manifested by the *kohein gadol* and Yom Kippur.

On Tisha b'Av we prepare the way, so that we may soon access those levels of *kedushah* again. The non-eating etc., of Yom Kippur is an expression of the great peace that we currently pray to have with one another. All our desires are only for God - we have no need of these things. On Tisha b'Av we separate ourselves from these things because we realize our mistake - desire for these things separate us from one another and from God, twice; in and of itself and because it separates us from one another.

Tisha b'Av is black on the outside, but we cannot make the mistake of thinking it is opaque. Quite the contrary. There is a tremendous light shining this day, the light of Mashiach, who is born on Tisha b'Av. If we want that light to shine into the world, we have to lift from our hearts the curtains of selfishness and separation, so it will first shine into our souls.

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