



Dvar Torah for Bein HaMitzarim (Between the Straits)

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Milah 5:18

(The three-week period known as Bein HaMitzarim began Thursday, 17 Tamuz/13 July. The "straits" referred to are 17 Tamuz and 9 Av, anniversaries of a number of Jewish tragedies. Among these tragedies are the burning of the Torah scroll on 17 Tamuz, and the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash [Holy Temple] in Jerusalem on 9 Av.)

The crux of our mourning the destroyed Temple is the distance it has created between us and our Father in Heaven. The gap is so great we are unable to set aside our egos and our immediate surroundings in order to focus on the good of the ultimate future. Not only has the Beit HaMikdash been destroyed, but so much else as well.

The ability to put aside self and selfishness can be most fully achieved in the Beit HaMikdash. Registering and maintaining focus on the purpose of life can be achieved in almost time and place, but certain times—the Jewish holy days and Shabbat in particular—and certain places—the Holy Land and the Holy Temple—make it easier. Yet, even under the most favorable conditions, the ability to absorb the essence of Torah depends on how holy one has made his body.

During Bein HaMitzarim we primarily lament the spatial element of exile—we have been chased out. We are shot at when we try to live peacefully in our land. We are denied the privilege of pilgrimage to the Holy Temple to "see His Face," that is, to give up our selves and selfishness. These misfortunes are worth crying about.

The world is so confused that people have become almost totally short-sighted, thinking of nothing but their own little worlds and barely beyond the immediate present. Confusion reigns by the force of constant illusion. This prevents us from focusing on the goodness of the ultimate future.

We have to cry. Especially, writes Reb Noson, we have to cry that the Torah has been set afire: the secrets of Kabbalah have been given over to those who abuse them for their self-serving desires.

We have to feel the pain of our losses so much, that our tears block out the distractions and bring the ultimate future into focus.

A prayer for peace from Reb Noson:

God, please eliminate war and bloodshed from the world. Draw great and amazing peace to mankind, so that nations will no longer raise arms against one another, and no longer study war.

Instead may all mankind understand the deepest truth: we did not come to this world to fight and argue, to hate or be jealous, to oppose or harm one another, God forbid, no! Our purpose in living is only to know You, for all eternity.