

This Learnathon is dedicated by Rabbi Avraham Aryaih and Laya Etta Witty, and Rebbetzin Shulamith P. Witty in memory of Rabbi Yitzchak Witty z"l

Tishah B'Av: A Day of Rejected Prayers

- 1. R' Avi Baumol (based on a lecture by R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik, 1979),**
<https://www.etzion.org.il/en/tisha-bav-day-mourning-day-teshuva>

There are a few things glaringly missing in our tefilot on Tisha Be-av. The first is selichot. How could we conjure up a fast day without the concept of saying selichot? How can we pray suitably without reciting the thirteen attributes of mercy?...

The common denominator of all of these factors is that they, in some way, ask G-d to accept our prayers. They remind G-d of His unceasing relationship with His people, and that is very much part of our fast day teshuva process. We fast, pray, perform mitzvot, and remind G-d of the promise He made to our forefathers, so that when He hears our prayers, He will have mercy on us and forgive our sin. All this is appropriate on a regular fast day; however, Tisha Be-av is different. It is not just a ta'anit tzibbur - it is a ta'anit tzibbur of aveilut. Sadly enough, today G-d does NOT accept our prayers...

Why does G-d choose not to listen to our prayers on this day? Perhaps it is to tell us that although this day is a public fast day, it is NOT a day of teshuva. On this day, we cannot expect G-d to listen to our requests for forgiveness, or our attempts at reconciliation.

- 2. Rabbi Moshes Isserles, Glosses to Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 559:4**

וכל הקדישים שאומרי' אחר איכה עד שיוצאים למחר מב"ה אין אומרים תתקבל...

And all of the *Kaddishim* that are said after Eichah until they go out from the synagogue the next day - they do not say "[may our prayers] be accepted.."

- 3. Eichah 3:8 (chabad.org tr.)**

גם כי אֶזְעַק וְאֶשׁוּעַ, שְׁתָּם תִּפְלְתִי.

Though I cry out and plead, He shuts out my prayer.

- 4. Eichah 3:44 (chabad.org tr.)**

סִכּוּתָהּ בָּעָנָן לָהּ, מֵעֲבוּר תִּפְלָהּ.

You have enveloped Yourself in a cloud, so that no prayer can pass through.

- 5. R' Elazar HaKalir, שְׁבַת סוּרֵי מִנְיָ (Kinah 6, R' Weinreb tr.)**

סִכּוּתָהּ מִשָּׁפֶן מַסְכּוֹת דְּבִירֵי.

You spread a canopy over heaven to cover my Temple.

- 6. R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Kinot Mesorat HaRav* p. 202**

The *paytan* laments that G-d has enveloped and covered both the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle) and the *Beit HaMikdash* in a cloud in order to prevent the words of the *paytan* from reaching Him. G-d has completely alienated and separated Himself from His people [see Eichah 3:44]...The term *sakota* represents a complete termination of the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people, to the extent that prayer is rejected and does not even reach G-d. G-d has enveloped not only the *Beit HaMikdash*, but any place of prayer, in a cloud which rejects the prayers of the Jewish people. This is the menacing fulfillment of [Eichah 3:8]...Access to G-d is denied.

Political despair

7. Divrei HaYamim II 35:25 (chabad.org translation)

וַיִּקְוֶנוּ יִרְמְיָהוּ עַל יְאֹשִׁיָּהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל הַשָּׂרִים וְהַשִּׁרֹּת בְּקִינֹתֵיהֶם עַל יְאֹשִׁיָּהוּ עַד הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְנוּם לְחֶק עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָנֶם כְּתוּבִים עַל הַקִּינֹת.
And Yirmiyahu lamented Yoshiyahu, and all the male and female singers spoke of Yoshiyahu in their lamentations until this day, and they made them a statute over Israel, and behold, they are written in the lamentations.

8. Yirmiyahu, ירמיהו על יאשיהו, (Kinah 11, R' Weinreb tr.)

רְשַׁעְתִּי וְנִסְעַתִּי, וְנִטְשׁ אֶהְיֶה.

But I acted wickedly, was expelled, and my shelter [the Temple] is now forsaken.

9. R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Kinot Mesorat HaRav* p. 299

I do not know why this *kina* does not conclude with *neḥama*, consolation.

10. R' Avrohom C. Feuer and R' Avie Gold, *The Complete Tishah B'Av Service* (ArtScroll, p. 183)

This *kinnah* describes King Yoshiyahu's tragic and untimely death, when, with his last breath, he remorsefully repented his sin against G-d's words that he had heard from the prophets. But it was too late. Not only was Yoshiyahu doomed, but the entire kingdom of Judah was now on a course of irrevocable, ultimate destruction. Hence, the enormous tragedy of Yoshiyahu's death, because with him died the very last hope and opportunity to save the Temple and the Jewish people.

Religious despair

11. R' Elazar HaKalir זכר (Kinah 16, R' Weinreb tr.)

זָכֵר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה צָר בְּפָנַיִם. שָׁלַף חֶרְבּוֹ, וּבָא לִפְנֵי וּלְפָנַיִם. נִחְלַתְנוּ בַעֲת, כְּטִמְאָה לְהֵם הַפָּנִים. וְגִדְרָה פֶרֶקֶת בַּעֲלַת שְׂתֵי פָנִים.

Remember what the foe [Titus] did within the [Temple] precincts.

He drew forth his sword and entered the Holy of Holies.

He shocked our heritage when he profaned the show-bread,
and pierced the curtain, embroidered on both sides.

יְתוּמִים גַּעַל בְּמַגֵּן מְאֻדָּם. וַיִּמְדַּד קוֹ כְּמַרְאֵה אֲדוּמָדָם. מִיַּמִּינוּ דָּלְחָה, וְהַשְׁכִּיר חִצָּיו מְדָם. כִּינְצָא מִן הַבַּיִת, וְחֶרְבּוֹ מְלֹאָה דָם.

The orphaned [nation], he disgraced with his bloodstained shield.

He drew a line in reddish color.

He dirtied our waters, and his arrows were glutted with blood,
as he left the Temple with a bloodied sword.

עַל הַגּוֹתוֹ הוֹיֵת גְּבָר. וְנִטְשָׂה אֶל אֶל-יָדוֹ, לְמוֹלוֹ לְגִבְרָה. מְצָרִים וְכָל לְאֻם, אֲשֶׁר בָּם עֶבֶר. וְאֲנִי בְּתוֹךְ אוֹיְוֵי, אָרוּץ אֵלָיו בְּצַוָּאָר.

[We mourn] because this mortal schemed evil schemes

and raised his hand against G-d, as if to defeat Him, saying:

“He could defeat Egypt and all other nations.

But I, inside His precious [Temple], will run against him boldly.”

אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, זָרָה כְּהַכְנִיסוֹ בַּחֲוָרָיו אֶקְלָה אֵשׁ. וְזָה צִעָה זוֹנָה הַכְּנִיס, וְלֹא נִכְנָה בְּאֵשׁ.

In the time of our forefathers, when the sons [of Aaron]

brought in alien offerings, they were consumed by fire.

Yet, he dared to bring in a harlot and was not singed by fire.

Despair of humanity

12. R' Elazar HaKalir, אָם (Kinah 17, Sefaria Community tr.)

אָם תֵּאכְלֶנָה נְשִׁים פְּרִיָם, עוֹלְלֵי טְפוּחִים.

If women could eat the fruit of their womb, the little babes clapping their hands...

אֵלָלִי לִי!

Alas for me!

אם תדבק לשון יונק לחד, בצמאון צהיהים.

If the tongue of a nursing baby could glue to his palate from blinding white thirst...

אללי לי!

Alas for me!

Physical despair

13. R' Elazar HaKalir, שבת סורו מני (Kinah 6, R' Weinreb tr.)

סחי ומאוס השימוני בעדרי חברי.

They called me dirty and repulsive, worse than all my peers.

14. R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Kinot Mesorat HaRav* p. 201

At times of catastrophe, the element of *Hillul Hashem* becomes insufferable. During the Holocaust years, Christian clergymen argued that G-d had abandoned the Jews and allowed the complete destruction of the Jewish people, thus fulfilling the words of their bible. I was confronted by these arguments, and I used to cry not only for the *Hurban*, but for the terrible desecration of G-d's name that these arguments represented. The significance, among other things, of the establishment of the State of Israel was that it put a stop to these arguments.

Hope is not lost!

15. R' Elazar HaKalir, שבת סורו מני (Kinah 6, R' Weinreb tr.)

כי תם חקת בכם אופניד.

You engraved Jacob's image into Your celestial throne.

16. R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Kinot Mesorat HaRav* p. 212-13

Engraving the image of Jacob demonstrates that the covenant between G-d and *Knesset Yisrael* is a permanent one. Whatever is engraved on the Throne of Glory, as written in Psalms: "Your throne stands firm from old; You exist eternally" (93:2). The covenant is not merely a transient one that was to be abandoned once the Jews sinned and were exiled from the land. Had Jacob been destined to remain in exile forever, his likeness would not have been engraved on the Throne of Glory...

The motif that our relationship with G-d is timeless and immutable is also found in Lamentations. We may alienate G-d for a brief period, but there is no question that we will ultimately return to Him. This is the point of the verse in Lamentations, "Why do You forget us for such a long time, abandon us for so long? Bring us back to You, O LORD, and we will return, renew our days of old" (5:20-21). We cannot ever contemplate the complete severance of the relationship because it would be an impossibility. We know that, at some point in time, You will reconcile Yourself with us, and we will be reconciled with You and we will be close to each other. So why do You wait so long? After all, You have engraved Jacob on the celestial throne.

17. R' Elazar HaKalir, שבת סורו מני (Kinah 6, R' Weinreb tr.)

רם הבט נא, עמך בקלנו.

Look down from on high; we are all Your faithful people.

18. R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Kinot Mesorat HaRav* p. 214

The *paytan* declares, *Ram*, Almighty, in spite of the fact that we have sinned and have been alienated from You for so long, we have still not abandoned hope for our continued relationship. Even now, in spite of all our suffering, *habet na*, look at us, because *amkha kulanu*, we are Your people. True, we are scattered all over the world and we comprise many communities, languages and mores. A Jew from Halah and Habor, and a Canadian or American Jew do not look alike. But in spite of all the differences within the Jewish community, despite the differences of ability and incommensurate historical paths, there is something that unites all of us. What unites the Jews is Your Torah, and since we belong to You, You cannot rid Yourself of us. We belong to You, and You belong to us.

19. Unknown author, בְּצִאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם/מִירוּשָׁלַיִם (Kinah 31, R' Weinreb tr.)

אֶז יִשִּׁיר מִשָּׁה, וְשִׁיר לֹא יִנָּשֶׂה - בְּצִאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם.

וַיִּקְוֶנוּ יְרֵמְיָהּ, וְנָהָה נָהִי נָהָה - בְּצִאתִי מִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

Then Moses sang an unforgettable song,

When I left Egypt.

Whereas Jeremiah lamented and wailed a woeful wait,

When I left Jerusalem.

שִׁלְחָן וּמְנוֹרָה, וְכָלֵיל וּקְטוֹרֶה - בְּצִאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם.

וְאֵלֵיל וְתוֹעֵבָה, וּפְסָל מִצְבָּה - בְּצִאתִי מִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

The Table and Menora, burnt-offerings and incense,

When I left Egypt.

Idol and abomination, graven images and pagan monuments,

When I left Jerusalem.

תּוֹרָה וְתַעֲוִדָה, וְכָלֵי הַקְּמָדָה - בְּצִאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם.

שְׁשׁוֹן וְשִׁמְקָה, וְנֶסֶם יְגוֹן וְאֲנָחָה - בְּשׁוּבִי לִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

The Torah and its message and precious vessels,

When I left Egypt.

Happiness and joy; gone are sorrow and sighing,

When I return to Jerusalem.

20. Talmud, Makkot 24b (Koren tr.)

שוב פעם אחת היו עולין לירושלים כיון שהגיעו להר הצופים קרעו בגדיהם כיון שהגיעו להר הבית ראו שועל שיצא מבית קדשי הקדשים התחילו הן בוכין ור"ע מצחק. אמרו לו: מפני מה אתה מצחק? אמר להם: מפני מה אתם בוכים? אמרו לו: מקום שכתוב בו (במדבר א, נא) "והזור הקרב יומת" ועכשיו שועלים הלכו בו ולא נבכה?

On another occasion they were ascending to Jerusalem. When they arrived at Mount Scopus, they rent their garments. When they arrived at the Temple Mount, they saw a fox that emerged from the site of the Holy of Holies. They began weeping, and Rabbi Akiva was laughing. They said to him: For what reason are you laughing? [Rabbi Akiva] said to them: For what reason are you weeping? They said to him: This is the place concerning which it is written: "And the non-priest who approaches shall die" (Numbers 1:51), and now foxes walk in it; and shall we not weep?

אמר להן: לכך אני מצחק דכתיב (ישעיהו ח, ב) "ואעידה לי עדים נאמנים את אוריה הכהן ואת זכריה בן יברכיהו..." [Rabbi Akiva] said to them: That is why I am laughing, as it is written: "And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to attest: Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah" (Isaiah 8:2) ...

באוריה כתיב (מיכה ג, יב) "לכן בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש [וגו]" בזכריה כתיב (זכריה ח, ד) "עוד ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלים" עד שלא נתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה הייתי מתירא שלא תתקיים נבואתו של זכריה עכשיו שנתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה בידוע שנבואתו של זכריה מתקיימת. בלשון הזה אמרו לו: עקיבא ניהמתנו עקיבא ניהמתנו.

In [the prophecy of] Uriah it is written: "Therefore, for your sake Zion shall be plowed as a field..." (Micah 3:12), where foxes are found. In the prophecy of Zechariah it is written: "There shall yet be elderly men and elderly women sitting in the streets of Jerusalem" (Zechariah 8:4). Until the prophecy of Uriah [with regard to the destruction of the city] was fulfilled, I was afraid that the prophecy of Zechariah would not be fulfilled. Now that the prophecy of Uriah was fulfilled, it is evident that the prophecy of Zechariah remains valid. [The Sages] said to him, employing this formulation: Akiva, you have comforted us; Akiva, you have comforted us.