

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHURBAN

Individuality and collectively

REBBETZIN SURI GIBBER- July 23, 2014

There is a difference between the way we mourn a family member to the mourning we do for the Bais HaMikdash. For a family member, it goes from an intense feeling of pain- the 7 days of shiva, to less intense-1 month, and even less intense during the year.

But for our mourning of the Bais HaMikdash we start by less intense-the 3 weeks, build up to more intense shiva-9 days , to the most intense day-Tisha B'av.

Why the difference? For the death of a love one, Hashem wants us to go back to normal life-so the intensity lessens as time goes by. For the churban-Hashem wants us to feel the intense loss we have experienced. Tisha B'av was the beginning of all our tzoros-the churban, the Spanish Inquisition, World War 1 etc. By increasing the shiva, and the intensity reaches its climax on tisha b'av-we are meant to internalize this lesson. This day is the source of all our suffering.

We can not ask why we have suffered so much through the ages. But we can ask for what purpose have we suffered and we continue to suffer.

Rebbetzin Gibber gave 3 reasons and each she prefaced with a story to portray her point:

Rabbi Zvi Meisels, wrote about his experiences in Auschwitz. He told over the following story: It was erev Rosh Hashona. All boys from 14-16 had to line up and there would be a selection-those that were deemed strong enough to work, would live and the others would die. How was this to be determined-there was a bar-whoever was taller than the bar-would live and whoever was shorter would die. The fathers in the camp, realized that the kapos-the Jewish guards, could be bribed-if the fathers had something of importance to give the kapos their child would live. BUT-the kapos told the fathers , realize the Nazis have a count-they know how many boys they want. If you take your son out, another boy, who has been deemed worthy to live, will die in place of your son

A distraught father came to Rabbi Meisels with the following question: Am I allowed to save my only son from death, if I know it will cause the death of another Jewish child? Rabbi Meisels answered, 'I cant really give you an answer. I am here in Auschwitz without seforim, without rabbonim to ask.' The father begged, 'please give me an answer'. But the Rav deterred, I cannot give you an answer. So the father said, 'That is an answer. I did what the Torah told me to do, I asked a sheila, if you can not find a 'heter' for me to save my son, then I understand the answer is no.'

Rav Meisels says, this man walked with tears streaming down his face the whole Rosh Hashona and kept saying to Hashem, "Ribbono Shel OLam, please accept my not bribing the guards to save the life of my son, as you accepted Akeidas Yitzchok"

This man was a 'simple man'. But he wasn't. This man achieved greatness through his suffering .This is the first reason for suffering-to achieve inner greatness. When Hashem asked Adom after the cheit, "Ayako" Where are you? Hashem is really saying "Aicha" How is it possible for someone of your stature, you are the pinnacle of greatness, you are the purpose of creation to have made such a fatal error.

What was Hashem saying to Adom and to us: Hashem was not trying to scare him, but he was telling him, you changed the world forever, for you and for generations to come. Now the yetzer hora is in you, BUT

don't identify yourself as a sinner, as someone who can no longer do good, as someone who rebelled against Hashem.

"Aicha'-remember where you came from. 'Aicha' is a challenge to Adam and every human being. Hashem is telling us through our tzoros-discover the real 'you' that wants to connect to Hashem.

When we sin, Hashem tells us "aicha"-how did you fall so low? You are a child of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. You can rise to greatness. Tzoros are a way to bring out our inner greatness.

So when we are confronted with a difficult nisoyon, we are to look at the situation and see what inner strength we can bring out in ourselves from this situation.

Rebbetzin Gibber gave over 2 other powerful stories to illustrate the other 2 reasons for suffering.

At the end, it is up to each one of us, to work on ourselves to get closer to Hashem The 3 weeks, the 9 days culmination with Tisha B'av is the opportune time to do this. Our motto must be:

'Ayin Li Chavetz Tov Mimcho" Hashem , I desire nothing else in life, but to be close to you.