

Dear Friends;

I hope that you'll enjoy the following Parsha summary followed by a Dvar Torah on Tisha B'Av;

" Parsha in a Nutshell "

Moshe begins his revision of the Torah to the assembled Children of Israel, reviewing the events that occurred in the course of their 40-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, rebuking the people for their failures and sins, and encouraging them to keep the Torah and observe its commandments in the land that G-d is giving them as an eternal heritage, into which they shall cross after his death.

Moshe recalls his appointing of judges and magistrates to ease his burden of judging people; the sending of the Spies and the people's subsequent rejection of the Promised Land, so that G-d decreed that the entire generation of the Exodus shall die out in the desert. "Also against me," says Moshe, "was G-d

angry for your sakes, saying: You, too, shall not go in there."

And at the end of the parsha, Moshe gives assurance to his successor, Joshua, who will take the people into the Land and lead them in the battles for its conquest: "Fear them not, for the L-rd your G-d, He shall fight for you.

" Dvar Torah "

"Mourning", is a period of time that we grieve for someone's death who was close to us. Mourning is usually a very difficult and devastating period of time. A loss of life can be very painful, since it creates a vacuum in our lives which is very hard to fill. We have to continue with our lives without a person who was very dear to us. So, how do people cope with the pain when they loose a loved one? How do they get along with their lives? How can they receive comfort and solace?

Well, our sages tell us that in order to receive comfort and feel relief from the pain of mourning for someone's death, G-d has blessed us with a sense of

"forgetfulness". As the time passes by, and as much as we try not to, but we start to forget about the deceased. And as we tend to forget, slowly, slowly, the pain will start to go away and we begin to get a feeling of comfort. If G-d forbid, the human mind didn't have the power to forget, then the mourning period will never come to an end and the people will continue to mourn for the death of a loved one till the end of their lives. Although, memory is one of the most important functions of the mind, forgetfulness on the other hand, which is the loss of memory, is a great blessing that Hashem has given to us in order to get consolation in a time of mourning!

Tisha B'Av is also a period of mourning for us. We are mourning for the destruction of our two Batei Hamikdash (Temples) which were destroyed almost 2000 years ago. We are not simply crying over a building which was destroyed a long time ago, nor are we crying over the magnificent property which was burned, but rather, we are crying over the loss of our connection to G-d which is still in effect to this very day. By losing the Beit Hamikdash, the Shechina (G-d's presence) seems to have left us. We can no longer witness open miracles; we can no longer bring sacrifices for Hashem and we cannot perform the services on Yom

Kippur in the holy of the holies. To this day, many people still cry heavily and mourn on Tisha B'Av because of the lost connection between us and the Almighty.

But the question that you may ask yourself is why can't we get comforted after so many years? Why doesn't the formula of forgetfulness work in this case? Why do the tears still come out of our eyes after so many years? Shouldn't 2000 years be enough to forget? Why should the Tisha B'Av mourning be any different to a mourning for a loved one?? After all, we tend to forget a loss of life after a few years, but it seems that we can't get over the loss of our connection to G-d after 2000 years?!

Rabbi Yaakov Menken has an interesting explanation. He says that we start to forget someone, and feel relieved from the pain of mourning, only after the person is actually dead. But if the person is still alive, then the formula of forgetfulness does not work. Yaakov Avinu continued to mourn for his son Yosef, for a full 22 years and couldn't find comfort-- because Yosef was not dead; he was still alive! Accordingly, if we still feel the pain, if we still express the sorrow over the loss of Shechina, then it surely means that our connection to

G-d is not dead. It is still alive! Although, we don't see any open miracles anymore and we don't feel the connection as much as we used to in the old days, but we are confident that Hashem has not abandoned us and one day the Shechina is going to come back to live among us and the Beith Hamikdash is going to be rebuilt once again.

Our sages say that the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because of our actions and it's going to be rebuilt because of our actions too, and if the Temple is not built in our generation is because we don't have the "zechut" or the merit for it. That means that unfortunately, we haven't corrected our evil actions, and this is the main reason why we feel sad on Tisha B'Av. So, the sadness is not for the loss of connection, but rather, it's because we still haven't corrected ourselves after 2000 years!

Yes my friends, Tisha B'Av is the saddest day marked on the Jewish calendar, but it's also the ultimate day for "hope"! It's a day that we mourn for what has happened in the past, but it's also a day that gives us hope for a better future. It's the only day that sadness and joy live together in perfect harmony!

We are sad that the Shechina has left us, but we are happy that it's going to come back again. Even if we don't have the merit to see it in our time, but at least, our children, our grandchildren or our great grandchildren will have the chance or the merit to see it in their times. The future can only look brighter. It's a very strange feeling; to feel sad and happy on the same day! But this shows the greatness of Hashem that even in the darkest point in our lives, He never abandon us and gives us hope to carry on!

On the day of Tisha B'Av, "Tachanun" is not recited because the day has elements of a festival in it. Our Sages say that Mashiach, the one who will build the third Temple, will be born on Tisha B'Av. Let us hope that he has been born already and that this day next year will indeed be a day of joy and festivities.

Wishing everyone a meaningful fast;

Shabbat Shalom and Regards;

Martin