



Tisha B'Av

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תשעה באב תש"פ

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The ninth day of the Hebrew month called Av is the date on which both the First and Second Temples were destroyed; the first time by Nebuchadnezzar and the second time by Titus. This day concludes a three week period of mourning which begins on the 17th day of the fourth month (Tammuz), which is when Nebuchadnezzar broke through the walls of Jerusalem and began to commit horrible atrocities upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem for twenty-one days. Tisha B'Av commemorates the burning of the Temple and its total destruction. The prophet Jeremiah, who foretold of this event in the book of Jeremiah, also wrote the book called איכה in Hebrew which means "How oh L-rd" and in English is known as Lamentations. This book is a collection of poetic utterances which describes the bereavement of the Jewish people and Jeremiah himself in light of the events which took place in approximately 586 BC.

In this year's brief article for Tisha B'Av, I would like to focus on the concluding verses from the book of Lamentations.

יֵט אֶתְּהָ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תִּשָּׁב, בְּסֵאֶף לְדוֹר וָדוֹר. כִּי לָמָּה לְנִצָּחַת תִּשְׁכַּחַנוּ, תַּעֲזֹבוּנוּ לְאַרְךָ יָמִים. כֹּא הִשְׁיִבְנוּ יְהוָה
אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשׁוּבָה, חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם. כִּי אֵם-מָאֵס מְאֹסָתָנוּ, קִצְפָּתָ עָלֵינוּ עַד-מָאֵד.

*"You O L-rd, forever You will sit, Your throne for generation and generation. Why forever will You forget us, (Why) will you leave us for lengthening of days (for such a long time). Return us O L-rd unto You and we will return, renew our days as previously. For since You have utterly loathed us? You have been angry with us exceedingly." **Lamentations 5:19-22***

These verses contain a very important message for the people of G-d and upon a thorough study of them, one can certainly understand why Jeremiah concluded the book of Lamentations with them.

The first thing which Jeremiah reveals is that the destruction of the kingdom of Judah, the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple of G-d does not effect the sovereignty of HaShem (the L-rd). When Jeremiah states, "You O L-rd, forever You will sit..." he means that despite what took place, G-d is still reigning, i.e sitting upon the throne. According to the Scriptures, it was in fact G-d Who, using Nebuchadnezzar to punish the Jewish people for their sin, which actually revealed the righteousness of G-d. The verse concludes with the statement, "... Your throne for generation and generation." Jeremiah wants to inform the reader that this judgment did not have any implications in regard to the true Kingdom of G-d. This Kingdom is currently in the Heavens and that which was in Jerusalem was only an earthly reflection of it. The purpose of this earthly reflection was to demonstrate Kingdom truth to all of humanity. Unfortunately, under the leadership of Israel, Jerusalem became corrupt and idolatrous; this fact demanded that the Holy and Righteous G-d judge it.

In the next verse, Jeremiah writes, "Why forever will You forget us, (Why) will you leave us for lengthening of days (for such a long time)." This verse foreshadows the seventy year

captivity and the devastating outcome that those seventy years had upon the Jewish people. It is vital for one to understand that Judaism went through significant change during the Babylonian Captivity. Even though men such as Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel and the prophets were faithful to the word of G-d and taught truth to the people, the falsehood of the Babylonians greatly impacted many of the other spiritual leaders. When Jeremiah wrote verse 20, he was not only referring to those seventy years in Babylon, but because the word לְנֶצַח “forever” appears, there are those who understand this also relating to the period after the destruction of the Second Temple, which also speaks to Israel’s longest captivity. Although there is currently the modern nation of Israel and many Jewish people have returned to the Land, one should **not** conclude from this that the captivity which Titus and the Roman Empire initiated in 70 AD has ended. Without a Temple and without a Biblically based worship, the Roman Captivity continues to this day!

Such an understanding is supported in verse 21, “Return us O L-rd unto You and we will return, renew our days as previously.” The petition can only be fulfilled by the Messiah. In other words, Jeremiah is prophesying a future time when the Jewish people will cry out for a true and complete restoration. When one reads, “Return us O L-rd unto You...” it is a call for the Messiah to come and renew the Jewish people spiritually. The verse concludes with the sentence, “...renew our days as previously.” The question which must be answered is what is meant by the phrase בְּקִדְמָה “as previously”? One orthodox Jewish commentary התורה אומר, stated “חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ בְּקִדְמָה תַּחֲדָשׁ אֶת יָמֵינוּ כְּמוֹ הַיָּמִים הַטּוֹבִים שֶׁהָיוּ בְּעֵבֶר” Which simply means, “renew our days as in the good times that were in the past.” Such a perspective truly misses the intent of Jeremiah. The prophet is certainly not reminiscing about some “good old days”, but he is specifically referring to the Garden of Eden. The simple meaning of the term קִדְמָה in this context is “ancient”. The fact that Jeremiah is petitioning G-d for a restoration demands that he wants Israel, the covenant people, renewed to the condition in which Adam and Eve were prior to their fall into sin. Similarly, the words חֲדָשׁ וְנִשְׁוֹב (וְנִשְׁוֹבָה), implies much more than simply a return to a former experience, but the phrase strongly hints at both repentance וְנִשְׁוֹב and a kingdom renewal חֲדָשׁ.

The reason for understanding Jeremiah’s words with a Kingdom implication is that the word חֲדָשׁ is found in the book of Revelation (καινός) as one of the primary adjectives which describes the Kingdom of G-d. In this context, the Kingdom is called the New Jerusalem. Once again, the word חֲדָשׁ is found in the description of the Kingdom of G-d. The intent of Jeremiah within this verse should instill in the reader a renewed hope, as even though throughout the book of Lamentations the reader encounters one dirge after another, he concludes this book with a message which should cause the reader to repent and expect G-d to renew His covenant promises to His people.

The final verse is frequently rendered in a manner that seems to contradict what was said in the previous verse. For example, the **King James Bible** translates the verse with the following words,

“But thou has utterly rejected us, And are very angry with us!” Lamentations 5:22

כִּי אִם-מָאֵס מְאֹסְתָנוּ, קִצְפָּתָ עָלֵינוּ עַד-מְאֹד

Such a translation not only is problematic with the Hebrew, but it also fails to take into consideration any of the contextual aids in assisting one to rightly comprehend the intent of

the author. The verse begins with two words **כִּי אֵם** which when used together can mean “rather”. Hence, the **KJV** understood the intent of Jeremiah as G-d will not restore and renew Israel, rather He has utterly rejected them and will remain very angry. This understanding fails to take into consideration that Jeremiah did not utilize these first two words together as **כִּי-אֵם**, but the verse is actually written-**אֵם-כִּי**. In this case, the “hyphen” is called a **מקף** Maqqef. The purpose of this marking is to inform the reader that one should not understand the use of the phrase **כִּי אֵם-** as the idiom “rather”; but, that these two words should not be connected, as the word **אֵם** is actually related to the phrase **אֵם-מְאֵם מְאֵסְתֶּנּוּ**. In light of this, the first half of the verse is properly rendered as,

“For since you have utterly loathed us...”

The idea which Jeremiah conveys to the reader is that G-d has acted in a manner which utterly demonstrated His abhorrence, loathing, and detesting for His people’s behavior. Not only did G-d have these feelings, but Jeremiah also states, **קָצַפְתָּ עָלֵינוּ עַד-מְאֹד** that G-d acted upon these feelings by placing upon His people His intense anger. The passage concludes with the phrase **עַד-מְאֹד**. The reader should notice that once again the Maqqef is employed by Jeremiah to inform the reader that one should recognize that **עַד-מְאֹד** is an idiom. If one simply translates these two words literally the result would be “*unto very*” or “*unto exceedingly*”. The second word **מְאֹד** can be used uniquely in the Bible. This word is found 299 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and one of its most famous occurrences is in **Deuteronomy 6:5** where one is commanded to love HaShem with all one’s heart, soul and **מְאֹד** “*strength*” or “*might*”. Although the simple meaning of the word is “*very*”, it is obviously impossible to render this word in this way for **Deuteronomy 6:5**. Some have explained the meaning of the word in this verse as referring to the very essence of an individual. The exact phrase which is found in **Lamentations 5:22**, **עַד-מְאֹד** appears 17 times in the Bible and relates to something which is surpassing the normal limits. In other words, it speaks of an extreme situation. This phrase is found in Daniel relating to the Empire of the antichrist, which becomes exceedingly “great” until the heavens, i.e. wanting to wage war with G-d. When it is used in a judgment context, it reveals a total destruction when no hope remains. Hence, in our passage, Jeremiah is teaching that because G-d’s punishment was so intense when He destroyed Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, it was more than sufficient and now His people should expect His restoration and renewal by means of the Messiah.

Many of the English translations render the verse as,

“Unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.” NIV

In essence, their translations seem to be asking a question; for example the **Good News Translation** has,

“Or have you rejected us forever? Is there no limit to your anger?”

If one understands this verse as posing a question, then the answer must be a strong No! G-d has not utterly rejected His people, nor will His anger completely consume His covenantal promises which He made to Israel. In fact, one should understand verse 22 as pointing to the same message that the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed in **Isaiah 40:2**, that Israel has received from the hand of the L-rd double for all her sins. This passage from Isaiah

comes from the section where Isaiah speaks about G-d comforting His people through the work of Messiah.

A concluding question which is often raised is if Israel has paid double for her sins, then why, in the End Times, is there that period which Jeremiah (see ***Jeremiah 30:7***) calls a Time of Trouble for Jacob? This period will be the worst time of persecution ever for the Jewish people. In the midst of Jacob's Tribulation (the final half of Daniel's 70th week), two thirds of the Jewish people will be put to death. One should not understand Jacob's Trouble as punishment from G-d, rather the source of this time of tribulation is the antichrist. G-d simply allows this time to happen in order to use it for bringing the greatest number of Jewish people to faith in Messiah Yeshua. This message is truly what the book of Lamentations also reveals; namely, although the kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple were all destroyed, G-d's covenantal promises are still valid and will be fulfilled through Messiah Yeshua to the Jewish people at the end of the tribulation period.

This good news is exactly what the Prophet Zechariah meant when he announced that HaShem will turn the four fast days, which all relate to the destruction and despair which the Babylonians brought to Judah, into gladness and appointed days of good things (see ***Zechariah 8:18-19***).

Shalom and may you have a meaningful observance of Tisha B'Av.