

“OY VEY!” VS. “AD MOSAI?!”

PART 2 OF A SERIES ON THE BEIS HAMIKDASH

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What is the proper approach to thinking about the Beis HaMikdash during the Three Weeks? To what extent are we supposed to focus on mourning the destruction of the first two Batei Mikdash, as opposed to looking forward to the third Beis HaMikdash?



The Rebbe's perspective on this question¹ is based on the psak din of the Rambam that the communal fast days associated with the churban Beis HaMikdash will be nullified in the time of the Geulah, and more than that, they will actually be transformed into days of joy and celebration.² The reason for this transformation is that then it will be revealed how the events of these days were all steps toward the shleimus of the final Geulah.

If so, then the question is: what should be our approach to a day that we know was a tragedy, but that we also know was a necessary step toward the ultimate joy, a joy so great that the tragedy will eventually be completely forgotten? In other words, what should be our approach to an extended “yeridah l'tzorech aliyah”?

The answer is: it depends where we're holding in the process.

Imagine a situation where someone injured his leg and had to have surgery, followed by months of recovery and physical therapy, before he could walk on his own again. Consider how the average person might feel in the different stages of this process:

- Before the surgery takes place, he knows already that there is something wrong. Otherwise, he would not be planning to undergo surgery. At this point, the surgery itself probably feels a bit scary, even though he knows that it's for the greater good.
- After the surgery is done, everything seems to be a mess. He actually feels much weaker than he did before. Even though he knows that he is on the road to recovery, the discomfort of this stage stands out more than the fact that it is only a matter of time before he'll be able to walk again. Consequently, he is preoccupied with the negativity and suffering, and the day that he will be fully healed seems distant, almost a fantasy.
- As times goes on, he advances through the process of healing and regaining his strength. Although he is not yet able to walk, all the negative feelings that he felt right after the surgery begin to fade, and the idea that he will soon be healed begins to feel a little more real. If he pushes himself to stay positive, he can even start to get a little bit excited about it.
- Later still, he gets examined by the doctor again and is told that he needs

just two more days of recovery, and then he should be able to walk on his own. Upon hearing this good news, he almost forgets about the pain of the past. Of course, the key word is almost. He knows that he's still not there just yet. After all, he still can't walk. Emotionally, though, that pain is overshadowed by the fact that the finish line is so close. Instead, he begins to feel excitement and longing for those two more days to pass. He begins to get excited as he realizes that very soon, his health will be restored.

- The great day finally arrives. After months and months of pain, discomfort, hard work, and the frustration of waiting, he takes his first steps without the aid of crutches or a wheelchair. It's almost shocking at first, as it seemed so hard to imagine that this day would ever really come, but there is no denying that it finally has! Pure joy overtakes him, as he appreciates his ability to walk much more than he did in the past. More than that, the whole process that brought him to this point suddenly feels like cause for celebration, even though it had seemed so difficult when it was going on.

This may not be a perfect moshol for the Churban and the Golus in every respect, but there is one key point that it makes very clear. In the time just after the yeridah, what we feel the most is the pain, suffering, and mourning associated with the yeridah. However, as we approach the aliyah, it is the excitement of the aliyah that captures our attention. This is a simple fact of human nature.

This is the logic the Rebbe uses to explain the importance of bringing simcha into the Three Weeks and the Nine Days—only in ways that are permissible according to halacha, obviously—in our generation. The Rebbe consistently categorized us as the last generation of Golus and the first generation of Geulah, the reincarnation of the generation that left Mitzrayim, which the Arizal writes will be the generation to leave the final Golus.³ Nineteen hundred years after the beginning of Golus—which was never anything other than part of a process to bring the Geulah—it is only natural that our excitement about the third Beis HaMikdash should outweigh our pain over the loss of the first two. That doesn't mean that we don't mourn at all. After all, we're still not there yet. Rather, we are like the recovering surgery patient, just before the great day arrives.

If all of this is true of the Rebbe's generation in general, how much more so is it true after the year 5751, in which we saw simanei Geulah described in the Yalkut Shimoni as the signs of שנה שמלך המשיח נגלה בו. We can also add that if it was true then, how much more so now, after 27 more years of avodas Hashem since the Rebbe explained all of this to us. We are closer to the Geulah—and closer to the Third Beis HaMikdash—than ever before. If we can really believe that and connect to it, as the Rebbe asked us to, then we will not have to *choose* which Beis HaMikdash occupies our main focus during in the Three Weeks. We just need to recognize the truth. Human nature will do the rest.

¹ Regarding all of the following, see שיחת פרשת בלק תשנ"א at length.

² הלכות תעניות בסופו.

³ See ש"פ בא (ו' שבט) ובשלה (יג שבט) תשנ"ב, הערה יח.