

תפילת נחם

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Based on the explanations of Rav Chaim Friedlander zt"l (Sifsei Chaim III)

נחם ה' אלקינו - Hashem, our G-d, console

The word נחם has two applications. In its simple form it means comfort. One who comforts a mourner cannot replace the loss that results in pain. Thus he cannot eliminate entirely the suffering and sorrow that the mourner is enduring. Rather by empathizing with the mourner one can assuage the pain. However, the true נחמה is the removal of the pain by replacing the loss. After Yitzchok married Rivka the miracles that occurred in his mother's lifetime returned. Then the Torah states that Yitzchok was comforted for his mother's death. Only after the return of that which was lost can נחם be used in its true sense.

אֶת אֲבְלֵי צִיּוֹן - those who mourn the *Bais Hamikdosh* and the status of the Jewish Nation-

The word ציון denotes something specific (as in מקום המצוין). It refers both to the *Mikdosh* where the *shechina* resided, and to the Jewish People who are unique amongst the nations.

וְאֶת אֲבְלֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם - and the mourners of *Yerushalayim*

Yerushalayim was not only a city bustling with inhabitants and visitors. *Yerushalayim* had a distinct holiness to it. Only within its walls was one permitted to consume meat of certain offerings and fruits of *maaser sheni*. Its holiness permeated the very beings of those who entered the city raising them to spiritual heights. *Chazal* say that when one would bring his fruits of *maaser sheni* to be eaten in *Yerushalayim* he would remain there for some time. During his stay he would witness multitudes focused only on spiritual pursuits. He would also be caught up in their fervor resulting in his own dedication to *Torah* and *yiras shomayim*. Thus besides for mourning the destruction of the *Bais hamikdosh* described in אבלי ציון, there is a need for an additional mourning for the city of *Yerushalayim* itself.

Up until this point we have requested comfort for the people who mourn *Tzion* and *Yerushalayim*. Now we begin praying for comfort for the city of *Yerushalayim* itself, whose situation bespeaks its mourning.

וְאֶת הָעִיר הָאֲבֵלָה וְהַחֲרָבָה וְהַבְּזוּיָה וְהַשׁוֹמֵמָה,

הָאֲבֵלָה מִבְּלֵי בְּנֵיהָ - mournful without its children

Just like parents mourn the loss of their children so too *Yerushalayim* mourns the loss of its children, its inhabitants.

וְהַחֲרָבָה מִמְּעוֹנוֹתֶיהָ - destroyed without her residences

The word מעון is not only referring to the homes in the city that were destroyed. It is referring to the *Bais Hamikdosh* - the מעון, the dwelling place of G-d. Additionally it refers to the smaller dwelling places of the *shechina*, the *batei knesios* and *batei midroschos* that were destroyed.

Although there may be similar places in *Yerushalyim* that have been rebuilt, the level of intensity of the *shechina* that was in the *Bais Hamikdosh* and in the other holy places cannot be achieved.

and scorned without her glory - **וְהַבְּזוּיָהּ מִכְבוֹדָהּ**

Her glory has left. This does not only refer to the glory of the city itself. The glory we are referring to is the honor of G-d that has been disgraced. The true glory of *Yerushalyim* was that it was and is G-d's city as we say in davening "And to Your city *Yerushalyim* return with mercy." The destruction of *Yerushalyim* is the disgrace of G-d's glory and honor.

and desolate from any inhabitants - **וְהַשׁוֹמֵמָה מֵאִין יוֹשֵׁב**

What is the difference between *Yerushalayim*'s children, whom we have already mentioned, and its inhabitants? Children refer to those whose lives already embody the holiness that *Yerushalayim* offered and represented. They are like children who are living the lives that their fathers did. Inhabitants however, refer to those who have come to soak up the holiness of *Yerushalayim*. They are not yet living the life of children, yet their aspirations are to reach that goal. Merely living in *Yerushalayim* without any higher ideal does not even merit the title of inhabitant.

and she is sitting - **וְהִיא יוֹשֶׁבֶת**

She is sitting on the floor like a mourner.

and her head is covered - **וְרֹאשָׁהּ חֲפוּי**

She puts her head down and covers her face out of embarrassment.

like a barren woman who never gave birth - **כְּאִשָּׁה עֲקָרָה שֶׁלֹּא יָלְדָה**

One of the roles of a woman is to bear and raise children. One who is barren cannot fulfill this function. So too, *Yerushalayim* cannot fulfill its function when its children have been exiled.

and legions have devoured her - **וּבִלְעוּהָ לְגִיּוֹנוֹת**

Not only have the children of *Yerushalayim* and its inhabitants left, something worse has occurred. The legions of other nations have conquered and devoured *Yerushalayim*.

and idolaters have conquered her. - **וַיִּכְרְשׁוּהָ עוֹבְדֵי זָרִים**

Not only did the armies conquer *Yerushalayim* but the idolaters placed idols in the *Heichal* and throughout the city. This we see in the background of the *Kosel*, the last standing wall of the *Mikdosh*. There stands a mosque in the place of the *Mikdosh*. The entire city of *Yerushalayim* is filled with churches and similar places of worship. Not only has the holiness left but impurity has taken over.

Until now we have described the destruction of *Yerushalayim*, now we move on to the people of *Yisroel*.

and they cast Your nation *Yisroel* to the sword - **וַיִּטְּלוּ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחָרֶב**

They murdered a great portion of the Jewish Nation.

and they wantonly murdered the devout servants of G-d. - **וַיַּהַרְגוּ בְּזוּלוֹן חֲסִידֵי עֲלֵיוֹן**

They were not satisfied with just killing Jews, they sought out the “devout servants of G-d.” Their purpose was to destroy and uproot all holiness in the world. Therefore not only did they kill “your Nation”, the Jews because they are G-d’s Nation, they singled out the holiest people and murdered them.

Therefore *Tzion* cries bitterly and - **עַל כֵּן צִיּוֹן בָּמַר תִּבְכֶּה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם תִּתֵּן קוֹלָהּ** - *Yerushalayim* raises its voice.

Crying denotes a deep inner cry while raising its voice refers to an external cry. *Tzion* which refers to the Jewish Nation the internal part of *Yerushalayim*, cries internally. *Yerushalayim*, referring to the exterior city and its surroundings, raises its voice externally.

my heart my heart aches for those who were - **לְבִי לְבִי עַל חַלְלֵיהֶם מְעִי מְעִי עַל חַלְלֵיהֶם** - killed, my innards my innards ache for those who were killed.

What is the difference between an aching heart and aching innards? The innards refer to an involuntary feeling. When someone gets angry or nervous his innards begin to hurt. The heart, the central place of feeling in a person, refers to pain that a person wills himself to feel. My heart, the person willingly and consciously cries out. However, the pain is deeper. Even the innards of the person turn over and are sickened from pain.

because You, G-d, consumed her with - **כִּי אַתָּה ה' בָּאֵשׁ הִצַּתָּהּ וּבָאֵשׁ אַתָּה עֹתִיד לְבְנוֹתָהּ** - fire and will rebuild her with fire

Fire refers to the *midas hadin* of G-d. G-d destroyed the *Mikdosh* with His *din*. In the future the Jewish Nation will be elevated to a level that they will exist and flourish even without the trait of mercy from G-d. They will be able to bear the exactness of G-d’s judgement. This fire of *din* will destroy all evil while the Jews will endure it.

as it says “I will - **כְּאִמּוֹר וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָּהּ נְאוּם ה' חוֹמַת אֵשׁ סָבִיב וּלְכַבּוֹד אֶהְיֶה בְּתוֹכָהּ** - eventually be for her a wall of fire around and I will be an honor in her midst”

The wall of fire, *midas hadin*, will surround the *Mikdosh* that will be built in the future. This fire will destroy all evil and thus protect the *Beis Hamikdosh*. This will bring great honor to G-d’s name.

Blessed are you *Hashem* who consoles *Tzion* and - **בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מְנַחֵם צִיּוֹן וּבוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם** - rebuilds *Yerushalayim*.

Tzion, the Jewish Nation, will be consoled when G-d replaces that which was lost. He will rebuild the *Yerushalayim* that was destroyed.

שִׁיבְנָה בַּמְהֵרָה בְּיַמֵּינוּ אָמֵן

לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמַת מוֹרֵינוּ הָרַב יִשְׂרָאֵל חַיִּים יְהוּדָה בֶּן ר' יִצְחָק יַעֲקֹב זצ"ל