
intro

IT IS THE 23rd of Tammuz, 5779, and SIX days into the “Three Weeks.” It is also 1,949 years since the Second Temple was destroyed, and 2,441 since the destruction of the First Temple. Yet life goes on for most Jews, including religious ones, as if things aren’t so bad.

Seemingly they’re not. We’re in exile, but not on the run. We live in nice houses in nice communities. We have kosher food galore. We send our children to good schools. We wear nice clothing. We make Shabbos and Yom Tov in style, and some even make billions of dollars. You call THAT exile?

The WORST kind.

There is a story in the Talmud¹ of Nachum Ish Gamzu who, while riding his donkey, was approached by a beggar for some food. Nachum had every intention of giving the man what he needed, as soon as he dismounted from his donkey. After all, what difference could a few extra seconds make to the starving man?

EVERY difference. In that moment the man died. By the time Nachum dismounted to help the man, he was dead. Nachum became so distraught that he cursed every part of his body that should have been used to save the man, and consequently suffered terrible physical injury and discomfort for the rest of his life.

The situation was apparently far more dire than Nachum had detected—and he was extremely sensitive. He was shocked at how oblivious he had been to the man's true situation, and punished himself for it. When his students told him, "Woe that we have seen you like this!" he replied, "Woe if you had NOT seen me like this."²

In our case, we are Nachum. Who is the beggar? That is the Shechinah. We are aware of the

¹ Ta'anis 21a.

² He meant that it was better for him to suffer physically in THIS world for his mistake, rather than spiritually in the NEXT one.

Shechinah, talk about her, perhaps even do things to try to cause her to dwell among us, but ALL of it is on our OWN time. We know that the Shechinah needs something, but we are oblivious to just how desperate the situation really is.

There is one important twist, however. In the world's case, it is not the Shechinah that is ultimately at risk, but MANKIND—and the JEWISH PEOPLE specifically. In truth, God needs NOTHING. Being oblivious to this hurts no one but us in the end.

As Tisha B'Av comes around again, this is CRUCIAL to know.

WHY?

