SOME REFLECTIONS AT TISHA BE AV

By Enzo Nahum
Monday, July 23, 2018

A mere century ago, Jews keenly felt a personal bereavement of the loss of the Temple. They sobbed and wailed over the fact that the beautiful Temple, the symbol of their nationhood as well as their faith, was being desecrated daily, that the Holy of Holies was being treated like a playground, or worse. The Wall symbolized the loss of Jerusalem and the millennia of exile of the Jewish people.

We should be crying today as well - for the fact that we no longer cry.

The triumphant words of Colonel Motta Gur, exclaimed in 1967, that "**הר הבית בידינו**" -**"The Temple Mount is in our hands!"**, seems like a cruel joke today. It was in our hands - **for only a matter of hours. In what can only be regarded as a modern Jewish tragedy, Moshe Dayan decided to hand the keys of the Temple Mount to the Waqf of Jordan.**

Now, as before, Muslims continue to do whatever they want in Judaism's holiest spot - but the tragedy is multiplied, because now it is Jews who are stopping other Jews from ascending and it is Jews who are allowing the defilement of our holiest space to continue.

The Kotel, formerly a bitter symbol of destruction, now is characterized as a plaza of victory. Yet it is merely a retaining wall for a platform upon which is found Judaism's holiest spot. The focal point of Jewish yearning has never been the Wall - the Wall has always been, and remains today, a stark reminder of the loss of the Temple. The focus is only a few meters beyond the Wall, to a place that continues to be desecrated every minute of every hour of every day. The Kotel is not a place to celebrate - it is a place to mourn that continuing desecration.

We used to gather three times a year at that location. All personal differences dissolved during each Chag. The festivals were national celebrations, a family reunion, the happiest times of the year. That has been lost.

Why aren't we crying? Why have we lost sight of the tragedy that still exists, today, in the Har HaBayit? At the very moment of the culmination of Jewish national aspiration for 1900 years, during the giddy and emotional high of finally returning to the epicenter of our forefathers' yearnings, we faltered. We acted as if we really were not masters of our own land. We failed the generations before us. The millions of tears of those who cried at the Kotel for hundreds of years are wasted.

Giving up the Temple Mount was not an act of peace. Instead, it was a guarantee for perpetual war. Because we did not take control of this supremely important place, we now are in a position of bargaining for our own capital - as if it doesn't really belong to us. Even with political sovereignty, we are still acting as if we need to get permission from others in order to assert our rights.

It is of course a wonderful thing to see Zechariah's prophecy come true, with **children playing** on the streets of Jerusalem again, to see the Hurva resurrected, to see Jews return to the center of their universe - but today's Jerusalem has a cancer in its very heart. A cancer that is spreading.

The tragedy is even keener than it was before 1948, before 1967. **The tragedy today is our own fault.** The **Psalmist asks**, "מי יעלה בהר ה' , ומי יקום במקום קדשו?" *"Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord? and who shall stand in His holy place?"* How can we answer that question today without tears?

Yet we have forgotten how to cry. We have masked our bare, painful emotions with intellectualism and secularism. We have discarded our hearts and act as if we can survive with only our brains.

We cry at movies, at sports events - but we don't cry on Tisha B'Av. As much as we should be weeping for the loss of the Temples, we should also be weeping at the loss of our ability to internalize that loss.

We need to look at the tears of the Yerushalmi Jews of old and understand their source. Because the tears of loss are necessary to give us the strength to win.