

Presented By

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TISHA B'AV WEBCAST 5785

אשי ישראל ותפלתם... בשובך לציון ברחמים

Broken Tablets, Broken Hearts

August 3, 2025

Introduction

This program is dedicated by Richard and Debra Parkoff in memory of Richard's parents, Avraham ben Yitzchak HaKohen, *a"h*, and Rochel Bluma bat Yehoshua, *a"h*.

This presentation consists of works of lamentation for the catastrophes that have befallen our people. They are chosen for study and recitation on the day of Tisha B'Av. Most will be kinot from the traditional Ashkenaz selection. Others will be poems, essays, quotations from personal diaries, and historical narratives.

I encourage you to obtain a copy of the Koren Mesorat HaRav Kinot, co-published by OU Press and Koren Publishers, which contains commentary by Rav Soloveitchik *zt"l* and my translation of the Kinot. This will enable you to consult the texts that we will study and recite. It is available through OU Press by visiting oupres.org/product/koren-mesorat-harav-kinot/.

I will explain the text of each selection and comment upon it from my own perspective. After each selection the recording will allow for a pause during which you may review and reflect upon the presentation and rejoin the recording when you choose to do so.

There is a "real time" dimension to this presentation. My wife Chavi and I are in Israel and were here on October 7, 2023. We have visited the communities devastated by the horrific events of that day, prayed for our soldiers (two of whom are our grandsons), cried desperately for the many hostages, and sheltered ourselves from missile attacks by Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and all the attempts by Iran

to bombard Israel. We have witnessed Israel's most recent attack on Iran with anxiety and excitement and, at the time of this writing, are ardently hoping for a lasting peace. All these experiences have deeply affected the mood of this presentation, which thereby differs from my 36 previous annual Kinot presentations.

I once again thank the leadership of the Orthodox Union for allowing me this opportunity to publicly express my reactions to the destruction of the First and Second Holy Temples, and to the wanderings, travails, and miraculous successes of our people ever since, culminating most recently with the events which began on October 7th and continuing until the time of this writing.

I particularly thank my Executive Assistant, Mrs. Yocheved Goldberg, for her expert and invaluable assistance with this presentation and putting together the supplemental booklet. I also thank the OU Web and OU Creative teams and our OU Israel-based colleagues for their skilled assistance in making sure this presentation and creatively designed booklet are available to many worldwide, all Tisha B'Av day, no matter their location and time zone. And last but certainly not least, I especially thank Rina Hirsch of OU All Torah for facilitating every detail of this recording and making sure everything came together seamlessly.



Outline

I. The presentation will focus on individuals, ranging from the prophets Yirmiyahu and Zecharia ben Yehoyadah to soldiers killed these past many months.

A. Opening remarks: "To Fear or Not to Fear":

אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם מִפֶּחַד תָּמִיד, וּמִקְשָׁה לְבוּ יִפֹּל בְּרָעָה

Happy is the man that fears always; but he that hardens his heart shall fall into mischief.

(Mishlei 28:140)

B. פָּחַדוּ בְּצִיּוֹן חֲטָאִים, אֲחֻזָּה רָעָדָה חַנְּפִים: מִי יִגֹּר לָנוּ אֵשׁ אֲכָלֶת, מִי יִגֹּר לָנוּ מוֹקְדֵי עוֹלָם

Sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the hypocrites: Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

(Isaiah 33:14)

C. כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ גֶשֶׁר צָר מְאֹד, וְהֶעָקֵר לֹא לִפְחַד כָּלֵל

The entire world is like a narrow bridge, and the main thing is not to fear at all.

(Rabbi Nachman of Breslav)

II. List of Kinos and reflections for study, contemplation, and recitation:

A. Kinah #26, pages 468-471: Jeremiah went to the Graves of the Patriarchs (HaKalir)

B. Kinah #27, 478-481: Jeremiah Encounters a Once Beautiful Woman, Now Disheveled (HaKalir)

C. Kinah #34, 540-543: The Day of My Oppression, (Yehuda HaLevi)

D. Kinah upon Rav Yirmiyah, Murder of a Polish Rabbi (Yehuda Bialer). This is a lamentation by Bialer, who witnessed the murder of his mentor, Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kalish of Opala, in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942.

E. Murder of a Young Boy (Yehoshua M. Ahronson)

F. Kinah #31, 514-519: A Fire Burns Within Me (sung to a traditional chant; author unknown)

G. Kinah #21, 414-417: Cedars of Lebanon, Masters of Torah (Meir ben Yechiel)

H. Reflections on the Broken Heart: Verses in Tehilim/Psalms:

- 34:19: קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי לֵב For Hashem is near to those that are of a broken heart.
- 51:19: זָבַחַי אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ נִשְׁבְּרָה, לֵב נִשְׁבֵּר וְנִדְכָּה אֱלֹהִים לֹא תִבְזֶה The [proper] offering to God is a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, God, You will not despise. This verse delves into the emotions of broken heartedness over King David's feelings of guilt and remorse.
- 147:3: הָרוֹפֵא לְשִׁבְרוֹי לֵב, וּמַחְבֵּשׁ לְעֵצְבוֹתָם He Who is a Healer to the broken-hearted will also bind up their wounds. This verse, according to Rashi, discusses broken heartedness of being in Galut, as evidenced by the previous verse, the banished Jews in the Diaspora. Perspective of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch.

I. Reflections on Resilience and Recovery from Trauma. Perspective of Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg. This is an essay on suffering and resilience by Rav Weinberg, author of *Seridei Aish*, who survived the Warsaw Ghetto.

J. 8. Two soldiers, killed in battle:

- Amitai Granot, his diary
- Avi Goldberg, a father's tribute

III. Consolation, Hope vs. Optimism, "Days of Awe, Times of Awe", and Songs of Zion

IV. Works Cited

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ה. וויינברג, רבי יחיאל יעקב. קונטרס עת דודים, בסוף הגדה של פסח על פי בעל ה"שרידי אש"
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Akedas Rebbe Yirmiyahu

Yehuda Bialer

עקדת רבי ירמיהו

לזכר הצדיק הקדוש רבי ירמיהו קאליש
ז"ל מאוסולח, שנרצח בשנת תש"ב בורסח, הי"ד.

יום אכזרי מפרפר, השמים מקלחים אש,
הוקה כפר-מסעות, צמת דרכים ללא שוב,
המרצפת מובסת דם, בדמע המסיל עקוב,
נשמות בסיחי נשפכות, שטן צפרניו לוטש.

בכי ילדים, אמהות נפלצות, נאצי צורם-גוצש,
רבי ירמיהו על צקדה, צטרת טלית צטוף,
תפלה שפתותיו רוחשות, חור, גצה שטוף,
הנאצי מצליף, בוצט והוא זקוף גאות לבש.

שמורות ציניו עצומות, צקון לחשו יצק,
טפות דם מטפטפות והוא לנגשיו ילצג,
לא נכנע, לא הפסיק, צדי ססע פסיעות שלש.

הנאצי משתולל, חיל-חרון אותו אָחו —
רגלי רבי כושלות, למרום בפיו פרבש...
הבהיק ירי... וצמד מדפק הלב הקדוש.

ורשה תש"ח.

Suffering & Resilience

Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg

כל אדם בן-חורין אין חירותו מוחלטת ושלימה, הנהו עבד ובן-חורין בבת-אחת: בן-חורין לגבי פעולותיו מדעת ובמתכוין, ולגבי כוחות נפשו החיצוניים והגלויים. אבל בחביון-נפשו פנימה מסתתרים כוחות איתנים אסורים באזיקים ומשועבדים ונרצעים לאיזה נמצא משעבד כמוס. אין אדם מוכשר ליצירה גדולה כל-זמן שכוחות חבויים אלו כבולים, כי אין יצירה אלא התגלות חופשית של כוחות הסתר הללו. ברם, לפעמים באה איזו דחיפה מן החוץ וקורעת את הכבלים הנפשיים ומשחררת את האדם הפנימי, ואז הוא נעשה בן-חורין גמור ושלם.

והוא הדין ביסורים, יוצרים הם הלך-נפש חדש באדם, ועל-כן אמרו חז"ל: יסורים ממרקין עוונותיו של אדם. דימו חז"ל יסורים לתשובה — בשניהם נשמה חדשה נולדת ובאה לעולם. כוחות חדשים חורגים מן המסגר ומהפכים את ההווה הקודמת.

נמצאנו למדים את הכוח העצום שיש בכל איש ישראל. אף במצב שבו נראה כי היהודי חסר-ישע לחלוטין, אוסרים אותו, משפילים אותו, מענים אותו — יש לו מקום בנפשו שבו הוא ריבון יחיד, ואין שום כוח בעולם-הזה שיכול לפלוש לתוכו בכוח הזרוע. הוי אומר: ישנם מאורעות שאין לאדם שליטה עליהם, אך לכל אדם יש מרחב נפשי שהוא לבדו השליט בו. ועצם שמירת השליטה באותו מרחב, יש לה זיקה והשלכה על המציאות החיצונית, הן כלפי שמיא, והן כלפי אדם.

Introduction to Psalms 34

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms*

PSALM XXXIV

V. 1. This psalm is derived entirely from an event that took place in David's own personal life. He wishes to make known his personal experiences to all of mankind in order to show them the way to salvation. This chapter refers to an event in David's difficult life which surely represents the nadir of all the affliction which he experienced during his sojourn on earth. David, who had shed his blood in order to insure the welfare of his people and to save its honor, David, the much-praised son-in-law of the King, now had to flee from his own father-in-law and seek refuge among the enemies of his people, because there was no safe place for him in the midst of his own nation. Then, in order to escape death at the hands of the foes among whom he had sought safety, David had to pretend that he was an imbecile, and he had to deem it his good fortune that King Abimelech, thinking him to be a feeble-minded beggar, drove him away without harming him. Cast down from the heights to such depths of despair, David here proclaims those cardinal truths that contain so much practical wisdom. וילך בשנותו וגו' (see Samuel I, 21:14 ff). טעם primarily means "taste" and therefore denotes "good sense" which examines and evaluates the material nature of things in terms of whether or not they are "agreeable" to man. Freely translated, this would be the mental ability to recognize and evaluate the truth and propriety of things and circumstances; in other words "insight," "understanding" or "good judgment." שנה is "to change" an object, and also to show something in a different light from what it really is, as in קומי נא והשתניתי (Kings I, 14:2), "disguise yourself," "pretend." David "disguised" his own intelligence; he pretended that he had lost his reason, he feigned insanity.

Optimism & Hope

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Celebrating Life*

I have met many survivors of the camps, and others who lost entire families there. They still bear the marks of that trauma. How could they not? In many cases it took them 50 years before they could even talk about their memories. Yet I am struck by their passion for life, by their tenacious hold on it. In small ways, and sometimes large, they have worked to build a different world, a world in which such murderous hatreds are no longer possible. Some kept their faith in God, others lost it, but most kept their faith in life itself. They did not give up, or give in to resentment and bitterness, or lapse into the nightmare of victimhood.

Somehow they preserved the lineaments of hope. Nowhere do I find more clearly than in these survivors the difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is the belief that things are going to get better. Hope is the belief that we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it does need courage to hope.