

Tisha B'Av 5771

Don't lie to HaShem

There are three stages in the teshuva (repentant) process:

1. to admit the sin before HaShem
2. to feel remorse at having sinned
3. to vow never to repeat the sin

One who desecrated the Shabbat by having a great time on the golf course followed by a delicious treif meal, must verbalize (privately) before HaShem what he had done. He cannot then say to HaShem, "The game was murderously boring and the food was atrocious – all in all it was a terrible day!" That would be to lie before HaShem. The way of a ba'al teshuva is to admit that the sin was pleasant at the time, but state his profound anguish, to the depths of his soul, that he had disobeyed and angered God, his father.

After we have established the moral, ethical and halachic value of honesty, picture the following scene.

This year, a man is asked by the religious court to explain the sad look on his face, and the man replies that it is the result of the dire circumstances which are present in the place where he lives.

He says that his city is "laid waste, despised and desolate. It is desolate of its inhabitants and foreign troops occupy her".

At this point the judges' hearts are breaking, and they ask him where does he live? And the man replies, "In Jerusalem".

At this point the judges accuse him of contempt of court for blatantly lying, because every neighborhood of Yerushalayim is alive with Jews and Jewish life. "Desolate?" Try to find a parking place in the city.

The above is an imaginary situation, but the reality is much worse. Because the above description of the holy city by the lying man is only part of the unhappy description of Yerushalayim that we, honest and decent people, state in the "Nachem" addition in Mincha service on Tish'a Be'Av.

Indeed, the very sad day of the ninth of Menachem Av, witnessed many of our national calamities, beginning with the refusal of the Jews to enter the Promised land at the time of Moshe Rabbeinu, and later in our history the destruction of the first and second holy Temples, and other heartbreaks. But does that justify the stating of untruths before HaShem?

The formalistic halachic reply is that we do not have the authority to make changes in the liturgy.

However, I fear that there is a much more devious reason among many people. It stems from the inability of these people to internalize the fact that Jewish history changed gears with the establishment of the Medina. That the Medina is the "hand of God" and, as such, requires our participation in its functions and institutions until the time we can institute the Torah as the law of the land.

How much easier it is to wave away all the responsibilities of being an active participant in the national renaissance of our nation in Eretz Yisrael by simply sitting on the ground and crying how terrible it is to live in Yerushalayim.

After the Six Day War and liberation of Yerushalayim, Harav Shlomo Goren zt"l, as well as other rabbanim, composed more realistic texts for Nachem.

This year, as in the past, I will recite the updated version of Nachem as suggested by the Temple Institute based on the Yerushalmi, in order not to feel deceitful before the God of emet (truth).

May Hashem in our time open the eyes and hearts of our leaders

to bring us to the “promised land” of appreciating and loving our Father in Heaven for what He has done and will yet do more for his chosen people.



Nachman Kahana