

"And the people wept in this night." (14:1)

The *Talmud* in *Taanis 29a* comments that "this" night was *Tisha B'av*, the ninth day of *Av*, which was to witness *Klal Yisrael's* most tragic events. Hashem said to the people, "*you wept without a reason, I will cause you to weep in the distant future.*" The people's unjustified desperation in reaction to the alarming report of the spies instigated severe misconduct which, in turn, caused death of that generation in the desert. Moreover, the consequences of that misconduct plague us to this very day. This unwarranted form of depression has been the source of significant problems for *Bnei Yisrael*. This unspeakable *galus* (exile) suffering did not occur because we took too much pleasure and wept too few tears when we experienced good fortune. Rather, it happened because we curtailed our joy and cried too many tears. The lack of confidence in our destiny, reflected by our feeling of powerlessness against nations, originated in a failure to recognize the true source of our power and strength. These circumstances have maintained our continued *galus*-suffering.

The *Torah* in *Sefer Devarim* admonishes us to examine the cause of our sins with the words, "*For you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joyfulness and with a happy heart, in the abundance of it all.*" This Divine prophetic condemnation traces the root of our historic tragedy to our tears of hopelessness. These tears promote un-Jewish anxiety, while they simultaneously undermine Jewish joyfulness and destroy Jewish self-esteem. The only worry which should fill a Jewish heart at all times is, "Does Hashem take pleasure in us?" The certainty of possessing Hashem's proximity, with His constant protection, should effect a sense of pride and self-respect in our hearts. We should be overwhelmed with the vigor of joyfulness. Has this been true? Have the long centuries of suffering taught us to rise above the the sea of depression to the plateau of joy and pride? Are we still shedding tears of failure and weakness more often than we are inspired to self-esteem and jubilation by Divine closeness?

Those who shed tears of despair do not realize the terrible effect these tears have had on the maintenance of our Jewish heritage. These un-Jewish tears and sighs only bemoan our own weaknesses. They serve as a pretext to promote the most shallow form of religious observance, justifying our moral apathy when faced with even the most trivial challenges to our faith. Tears are shed in place of displays of courage and pride. We need to promote a Jewish way of life as long as we live in a non-Jewish society. Those who shed tears of helplessness do not realize that this weakness constitutes a veritable disloyalty to the precious values and immeasurable beneficence with which Hashem enriches our existence.

Due to the illusion of futility, the Jewish people cried that night. These same tears of despair and

helplessness, in our own time, have caused many of our co-religionists to commit serious offenses. People lack the moral courage and resolution to battle for Hashem's sacred cause in purity and in total independence. They lack the determination to accede to Hashem's sovereignty in face of "popular" opinion. They feel that by injudiciously joining and supporting "other" approaches to the Divine, which deny the *Torah's* Divine ordination, they will somehow save the sacred *Torah*. Only when we are inspired by the pride that emanates from mitzvah-consciousness and the consequent feelings of joy and hope do we earn the knowledge of Hashem's proximity. Then the curse of *crying for no reason*, will finally fade away.