

“And the people wept that night.” (14:1)

Klal Yisrael believed the spies' malignant report of what they saw in *Eretz Yisrael*. They responded to the report in a manner unbecoming a noble people, a nation that had stood at *Har Sinai* and was privy to an unprecedented Revelation of the Almighty. What was their response? They cried – and cried. They withdrew to their tents and lamented the terrible “fate” that was awaiting them. They lived through a night of ceaseless weeping, a night of unwarranted weeping. Hashem also responded. The *Talmud* in *Taanis* 28a states that Hashem said to *Klal Yisrael*, “You wept without reason; I will provide you with a weeping for generations.” This refers to our national day of mourning, *Tishah B'Av*, the day upon which our two *Batei Mikdash* were destroyed, the day that served as the harbinger of our *galus*, the beginning of our long exile.

Hashem does not tolerate unwarranted weeping. While it is appropriate to mourn for a tragedy, it is wrong to transform a mishap into a tragedy, to view a temporary setback as a national calamity. It is not justifiable; it is not honest. Even in mourning, integrity must prevail. Another aspect of unmitigated grief should be addressed. The Jewish nation has undergone great tragedies throughout our tumultuous history. We have suffered persecution, affliction, and annihilation. We have always, however, bounced back. We did not resign ourselves to the loss. We took the necessary steps to rebuild our lives, to emerge from the ruins and go forth with courage and determination. We did not permit grief to lead to despair.

It is related that during the Three Weeks of mourning, from the Seventeenth of *Tamuz* to *Tishah B'Av*, *Rav Naftali, z.l., m'Ropshitz* would repeatedly sing a tune to the words of the prayer, “And You will restore the *Kohanim* to their service, and the *Leviim* to their chants, and *Yisrael* to its place of beauty.” He did not allow himself to be overcome by grief; he did not permit despair to take hold of him.

The story is told about a *Talmid chacham*, *Torah* scholar, who was once walking along the edge of a river when he heard a sudden cry for “help.” He looked around and saw a man struggling to stay afloat in the water. Unable to swim, the scholar quickly obtained a rope and threw it to the man, saying, “Better grab the rope. If you do not succeed, give my best regards to the *Livyasan*,” the legendary large fish at the bottom of the sea.

People who observed this incident had a difficult time accepting the scholar's callous remarks. He explained that this was not gallows humor, but an attempt to ease the person's anxiety somewhat, so that he would be more capable of grasping the rope and saving his life. When one panics it becomes difficult to see the way out. Even in the most difficult times, one must find some source of cheer, some positive outlook, to prevent depression and despair from setting in – a situation from which it is difficult to extricate oneself.