

## They shall eat the flesh on that night, roasted over the fire, and matzos; with herbs they shall eat it. (12:8)

It seems almost paradoxical that one should eat the *matzoh*, which symbolizes our freedom, together with the *marror*, bitter herbs, which represent our affliction. That is not the only anomaly of the Seder night. The night of the first Seder occurs on the same day of the week as *Tisha B'Av* of that same year. On the night that we celebrate the fortune of our redemption from Egypt, we are to remember *Tisha B'Av*, the day of the year set aside for the commemoration of the *churban*, the destruction of our *Batei Mikdash*. Why is it necessary to integrate misery with joy? Are we not taught that everything has its own time and place? **Horav Mordechai Gifter, Shlita**, suggests two reasons for this. First, at the moment of heightened spiritual joy, when we experience the freedom from bondage and the accompanying *kedushah*, holiness, it is incumbent upon us to reflect simultaneously upon the bitterness of exile. Thus, we will appreciate our present condition to a greater extent.

We note a second--more profound--aspect to this reflection. We must realize that until the final moment of the *geulah*, freedom, we were *still* tottering at the brink of destruction. The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, who challenges us every step of the way, works "timelessly" to bring about our destruction. The source of *churban* is *there* waiting to grab hold of us, preventing our liberation, hindering our triumph. That same night that resulted in "*matzoh*," freedom and joy, could just have easily been transformed into "*marror*," bitterness and destruction.

One must always realize that the *derech aliyah*, road to spiritual ascendancy, is fraught with the blandishments of the *yetzer hora* every step of the way. We cannot falter, even for a moment, or the fangs of the *yetzer hora* will pull us down to ruin and oblivion.

Rather than focusing upon destruction as the catalyst for appreciating freedom and joy, we suggest an alternative approach. In order to accurately assess the magnitude of the loss of an object, one must first appreciate that which he has had in his possession. Only after one is sensitive to the vibrancy and beauty of the *Bais Hamikdash* service is he able to truly recognize the meaning of its destruction.

**Horav Levi Yitzchok Horowitz, Shlita**, the Bostoner *Rebbe*, distinguishes between the two forms of remembrance which *Chazal* have instituted: *zeicher l'churban* and *zeicher l'Mikdash*. The latter recalls the vibrancy and sanctity that permeated the *Bais Hamikdash*, while the former commemorates the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*. The *zeicher l'churban* represents a passive approach to remembrance. We are to refrain from participating in unbridled joy. Upon decorating our homes, we leave a small corner unfinished as a reminder that as long as the *Bais Hamikdash* remains destroyed, our lives are no longer complete. When we prepare a meal, we leave one condiment off the table; ashes are placed upon the heads of a *chasan* and *kallah*, all *zeicher l'churban*. In regard to being *zeicher l'Mikdash*, however, the emphasis is upon the

positive. We recall the *Bais Hamikdash* and the Jewish life that flourished during its tenure.

Consequently, the Jew mourns in an unusual, almost paradoxical, way. The same Jew who rises in middle of the night to cry as he recites *Tikkun Chatzos*, the prayer commemorating the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*, also dances joyfully with the *lulav* and *esrog* on *Sukkos*--all to memorialize the *Bais Hamikdash*. He cries in remembrance, and he dances and sings in remembrance. The Jewish family who sit on the floor *erev Tisha B'Av* mournfully eating eggs and ashes will sit down to a table bedecked in finery in order to eat a scrumptious *Pesach* meal several months later. They eat *matzos* and *marror* wrapped together to commemorate the *Mikdash*. Indeed, the entire *Seder* is a paradox! The white *kittel* is the garment that is worn by nobility. It is also used as shrouds for the dead. The *marror* commemorates the bitterness and affliction, while the *matzoh* is the symbol of freedom.

We do not minimize our happiness by remembering the destruction, because our tears for the *Bais Hamikdash* are not relevant to the *Seder*. We remember the *Bais Hamikdash* in a positive, constructive mode. Our entire festival cycle recalls the service in the *Bais Hamikdash* in all of its splendor. We do not recall destruction. We remember the functioning of the *Bais Hamikdash*. The lesson is simple: The Jew does not constantly focus upon the loss and devastation. To do so would be counterproductive to Judaism, in addition to emotionally draining for the individual. The proper approach towards venerating the past is to mourn with dignity at the appropriate times and to honor in a positive, resolute manner at other times.

The *Seder* night is a night of education. It is a night in which we raise our awareness regarding joy, freedom, and hope, as well as--in contrast--servitude, persecution, and depression. The Jewish calendar is filled with times which commemorate both. How do we relate to this moment? How do we express ourselves during these times? On the *Seder* night, we wrap together the *matzoh* of freedom and the *marror* of affliction to teach us that they go hand in hand for the Jew. We cannot mourn a destruction unless we are aware of what we have lost. We are obligated to remember our loss in a positive, active manner. This way we will merit to bring it all back -- *bimheirah b'yameinu* -- one day soon!