

## *Idea for Tisha B'av/Yom Ha-Shoah*

August 2, 1998

1. See my *The Religious Thought of Hasidism*, chapters 15 and 17, re: the nature of evil (and exile). Kabbalists were generally dualistic, affirming not only the reality of the good but also that of evil, while Hasidic teachers held to a monistic view, denying the ontological validity of evil and affirming only the good, but in various stages or guises, etc.
2. See the above, chapter 17, selection 5c, from קדושת לוי השלם על איכה, offering the hasidic view. R. Levi Yitzhak points to the famous hymn recited on Tisha B'av, and interprets it to yield the hasidic view. The verse reads, ואלו ציון ועריה כמו אשה בציריה--"Wail, O Zion and her cities, as a woman in her birth pangs." The interpretation: In the course of her delivery, the woman feels great pain, but after the birth of the baby, she is very happy. However, those who are present with her are happy even during her suffering for they know that the pain leads to great joy. So it is with Zion: while her cities are destroyed she feels great grief and pain, but God rejoices because He knows that it will lead to greater happiness; the suffering is only temporary and the ultimate joy will more than compensate for the misery.
3. However, beautiful as the idea and the interpretation are, our generations in this post-Holocaust era find it extremely difficult to derive much consolation from them. For us, evil is hard as nails, and suffering is perhaps more real than joy. The crematoria successfully negated the ontological denial of evil.

4. For us, we point to the rest of the verse mentioned above<sup>1</sup>: וּכְבִּתּוּלָה חֲגוּרָה: "and as a maiden girded in sackcloth lamenting for the husband of her youth." Our historic experience is more this than the first half (according to the hasidic exegesis)--more like a bride whose love was never consummated because her groom has been killed and she remains a disconsolate widow. There is no compensation, albeit the possibility and even probability remains that she will remarry and find true happiness--but never with "the husband of her youth." What was lost will never be regained, and the evil is all too real, and the pain will forever endure.

fe: tisha-b'av.dwd

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1. Based on a verse in Joel 1:8--אֵלֵי כְּבִתּוּלָה חֲגִירַת-שָׁק עַל-בָּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ: .