

THE SEEDS OF RECONSTRUCTION

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(1) Tisha B'av always a black day. Zohar: on each day of the calendar a different angel is in charge; the Ninth day of Av --

Yet, Halakhah does not see in it unrelieved gloom. On verse
Halakhah maintains that this day also has certain festive aspects, therefore no

משנה . Similarly -- Agadah - Messiah was born on Tisha B'av. What is the major idea? That פסוק contains seeds of Geulah, that in destruction there are already contained the seeds of reconstruction.

What were such promises of redemption in the very midst of exile?
How did our ancestors during exile extract from the pain the lessons of גאולה?
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(3) I would suggest three such elements. First is -- the whole pattern of Torah and mitzvot. Think of how surprising it is. Most pagan nations thought the cult was relevant only to home countries. If exiled, they adopted new gods and newways. But the God of Israel is the universal Creator, and His word is therefore applicable and relevant everywhere in the world. Hence, the observance of Torah and the commandments kept us alive in exile and kept fresh our bonds to Eretz Israel.

Contribution here was that Torah and commandments apply to hutz la-arevitz as well as Eretz Yisrael. So the Ramban teaches us, in his commentary, that laws of the Torah apply primarily to the Land of Israel, but we are to observe them in the Golah as well.

It is therefore both ridiculous and tragic to hear the arguments propounded by so many Israelis, and especially by American emigres to Israel, that Torah and commandments were meant only for galut and they can be safely abandoned in the State of Israel.

Such an attitude, which reduces all of Judaism to a form of life insurance for secular nationalism, is both contemptible and dangerous. Contemptible -- because it mocks 100 generations of Jewish loyalty and self-sacrifice for God and

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Torah. It is dangerous because it jeopardizes Israel's soul in these critical ^{and} fateful days when its future is being molded.

It reveals, in addition, an element of pseudo-Messianism. The Christian heresy and the Sabbatian heresies too were based on the idea that now that the millenium has arrived, it is no longer necessary to observe the commandments. Do the Israelis want to make of Israel this kind of governmental false Messiah? Hence, what we learned from the hurban was that Torah and commandments apply both to the Land and outside the Land, and this is our saving grace.

(4) The second element was libat ha-Aretz, the love of the Land. We never abandon^{our} the hope for return. ^{And} people always cherish ^{such} dreams. We were Zionists before the term was invented.

Yet our historic conception was always more than nationalistic, and it is for that reason that we survived. We cherish ⁱⁿ dreams of Jewish independence, but never that alone. We adored Aretz, but also Shamayim.

Story of Lubavitcher Rebbe and Russian officer interrogating him. Rebbe silent, refuses to answer. Officer finally places pistol ^{on desk} and says "I will shoot you if you will not answer." Rebbe: "I am not afraid of you as others are, because others have many gods and one world, and so they are afraid. But I have one God and two worlds..."

Therefore the Rabbis decided against the extravagances of avilai Zion, a group of Pharisees who were so overwhelmed by grief at the destruction of the Temple that they decided to ban the eating of meat and drinking of wine. The Rabbis sympathized and admired them, but regarded them as extreme. To mourn for the Temple and Israel, yes, but never despair! So the love of Land and the willingness to endure without it made it so that we were some day able to return to it.

(5) The third element is ahavat Yisrael, the love of Israel. The Temple was destroyed because of sinat hinam, baseless hatred. Rav Kook: ahavat hinam. Jews thereupon decided upon antidotes, love of Jews. Better: family feeling, mishpahah.

-- no matter how much the term has been abused by recent Jewish novelists. In a family people disagree, argue, shout, but at bottom there is love and co-responsibility.

זהו זה פירוש של 'הבית'.

Story of Dr. Zand who at the end of his heroic adventures attempting to escape from the Soviet Union was told by two generals who interrogated him that we know you have no relatives in Israel and therefore you have no case for going, since the only ones permitted to leave Russia are those who have close relatives in Israel. He responded: "You are supposed to be the Jewish experts in this country, so let me teach you something. Every Jew is a relative to every other Jew. We are one big family. A colored Jew who is working in some City in Southern Israel, whom I have never met and his family has never known mine, we are much closer relatives than any one in this vast empire of Russia."

(6) As we commemorate the 1901st anniversary of the hurban of the Second Temple, ^{loyalty} let us reaffirm our love for the Torah and commandments, our love of the Land in its proper perspective, and, above all, the feeling that all Jews are part of one family.

(7) Armed with such attitudes, may we emerge from mourning to consolation and therefrom to the complete redemption.