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Jewish Responses to Catastrophe
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מי יתן ראשי מים - The Survival of the Literature of Destruction

In the 11th century or early 12th century C.E., Kalonymus ben Judah wrote the poem, מי יתן ראשי מים to elegize the Jewish communities of Speyer, Mayence (Mainz) and Worms that were decimated in the First Crusade. This poem was written as a kinah to be included in the liturgy for Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples. The poem, therefore, seems to be at cross-purposes with itself. Its intent is to commemorate a specific event occurring at a specific time and place. And yet, the poem risks undercutting its own mission by placing itself within the structure and strictures of the Tisha B'Av liturgy which seeks to subsume all past and future tragedies. The poet is not only aware of this tension but skillfully manipulates the ambiguity of his stance in order to accomplish his greater goal - survival of the poem so as to give eternal life to his beloved communities. good

The centerpiece of the Tisha B'Av liturgy is the recitation of *Eicha*. The kinot are additional laments that are traditionally recited afterwards. The kinah is thus a lamentation existing in the shadow of the Lamentation. The kinah, therefore, had to contend with the content and theological implications of *Eicha*. Most of the kinot for Tisha B'Av are on the subject of the destruction of the Temples in 586 B.C.E. and 70 C.E. and the ensuing exile. Some, like מי יתן ראשי מים, concern other catastrophes that have happened to the Jewish people in the Diaspora.

The Rabbis, in Mishnah Ta'anit 6, subtly encouraged the commemoration of other catastrophes on Tisha B'Av. This Mishnah claimed that not only was the Second Temple destroyed on the same day as the First Temple (Tisha B'Av) but three other catastrophes good

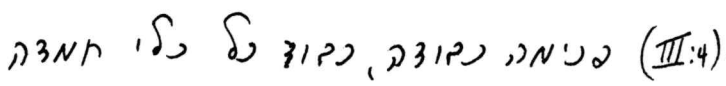
occurred then as well: "the Divine decree prohibiting our forefathers from entering the Land, the taking of Betar and the ploughing up of the City". There does not seem to be anything obvious that all these events have in common and perhaps, that is the point. All types of future catastrophes could fit into this category. The addition of the destruction of the communities of Mainz, Speyer and Worms would not be out of place on the mishnaic list. Thus, the primacy of Tisha B'Av as commemorating the destruction of the Temples would be maintained while permitting other catastrophes to come under its wing. This would accomplish several important things. Tisha B'Av would have fewer rivals on the calendar. There would be a ready made, one size fits all liturgy, ritual and annual commemoration for the survivors of future catastrophes thus providing them with the possibility of immediate comfort and meaning. Also, and perhaps most importantly, the vocabulary and grammar of Tisha B'Av, as put forth by *Eicha*, would be used to express the concerns resulting from future communal traumas thus limiting new theological viewpoints and theodic speculations. No catastrophe would be unprecedented; only the future redemption could claim the category of historical novum

Eicha was probably composed soon after the destruction of the First Temple. The destruction of Jerusalem and the suffering and grief of its occupants are described in highly emotional language. Zion is abandoned and in distress with no one to comfort her (1:2; 1:9). The destruction is understood as an act of God (1:12) who is even depicted as the enemy (2:5). All this has come about because the people have sinned, תַּטְּא תַּטְּאָהּ יְרוּשָׁלַם , (1:8). But God will one day redeem his people "כִּי לֹא יִזְנַח לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנָי: כִּי אִם-הוֹגָה וְרַחֵם כְּרַב תַּטְּדוּ" (3:31-32). *Eicha* reflects the covenantal theology of Deuteronomy; namely that sin must be punished and then can restoration occur. Both punishment and redemption are in the hands of God (3:38).

But above all, *Eicha* is primarily a scream of agony, grief and pain. The lament form not only allows for intense grieving and outpouring of emotion, it also, functions as an appeal to

God. The survivor reminds God of the devastation hoping to persuade God to intervene. *Eicha* ends on a note of hopelessness, which is probably why, traditionally, verse 21 is repeated again at the end. "Take us back to yourself, O Lord and let us come back; renew our days as of old".

מי יתן ראשי מים was written approximately sixteen hundred years after *Eicha* and one thousand years after the destruction of the Second Temple in response to the destruction of Jewish communities by the Crusaders. A new response to catastrophe was born- mass death through suicide. A new archetype thus emerged - Kiddush Hashem as cultic suicide, mass martyrdom and self sacrifice for the sanctification and unification of the Name.

מי יתן ראשי מים is written in six stanzas.¹ Each stanza begins with a (conventional) expression of grief, slightly reworded in each stanza. Each stanza ends with the same line. The last word of the penultimate line of each stanza rhymes with the word *herev*. None of the other lines end with this consonantal combination. Each stanza has its own consonantal ending:
Stanza I: *lye*, Stanza II - *im*, Stanza III - *dah*, Stanza IV - *rah*, Stanza V - *ot* and Stanza VI - *rer*.
Within the lines, the words seem to be piled up on each other. Many of the lines have an inner alliteration.  There are word puns in different lines within the same stanza (In Stanza IV, line(s) 2- *mar*, 3- *margoah*, 4- *mayroga*).
The difficulty in simply speaking the lines may lead the speaker to look forward to the end of the stanza when the rhyming pattern shifts, and a (musical) rest is implied.. At the same time, since the repeated line is one of horror, the reader resists getting to the end of the stanza.

There is also movement in the poem from the first stanza to the fourth. Each stanza increases in length by two verses until Stanza IV which is 41 verses. The fifth and sixth stanza

¹ This poem appears in most editions of the Kinot for Tisha B'Av as having a refrain spoken by the congregation eleven times. The rhyming pattern of the poem, however, indicates otherwise. The last word of the line preceding the refrain rhymes with *herev*, the last word of the refrain. The Artscroll edition shows this to be the case. Artscroll also does not indicate that these lines were intended as responsive reading and I agree. I have attached a copy of the Artscroll version at the back. For the purposes of this paper, I have marked the stanzas with roman numerals and the lines within each stanza are numbered.

decrease in length (Stanza V is 15 verses and Stanza 6 is 12 verses) but it is impossible to establish a pattern because Stanza IV disrupted it.

The poet also makes use of biblical references throughout the poem, a common technique. The poet uses the language of the biblical text as a way of speaking about the traumatic events of the mass suicides (Kiddush Hashem) of the Jewish communities during the Crusades. He employs these references alternatively as parody, proof-text or as a way of indicating the unspeakable. Thus, Kiddush Hashem, as redefined during the 11th and 12th century, is given biblical precedents and the biblical passages are invested with new meanings.

מי יתן ראשי מים begins with a rhetorical question, as does *Eicha*. Although there can be no answer nor is one expected, the asking of the question points to the survivor's need to make sense of the event, to bring some order back to a universe gone mad. But basically, these are questions that are born of a terrible grief and serve to express that grief.

The specifics of the calamity that the poet is bemoaning are not (yet) made explicit at the beginning of the poem. Since the poem was written as a kinah to be included in a collection of kinot for Tisha B'Av, a sensible assumption is that the poet is grieving over the Hurban. Additionally, the first 13 words of the poem is almost a direct quote¹ from Jeremiah 8:23 thus corroborating this assumption. There are other biblical paraphrases from *Proverbs* and *Ezra*. The final sentence which will be the line that is repeated at the end of each stanza is a reference to 2 Samuel 1:12. That this might be a clue to the intent of the poet is not yet clear. In addition, the last word of the line - *herev* - echoes *hurban*. This stanza seems to be fairly conventional in its use of lament language and form. In terms of content and form, then, this Stanza has the necessary qualifications of a kinah for Tisha B'Av.

Similarly, Stanza II begins with a reference to Jeremiah 13:7. Again, this stanza seems to include a general description of disaster using florid language. Line five ("beautiful maidens and

¹ The poet rarely quotes the Bible exactly. The word order may be shifted, a word left out, or different verb forms are used.

tender lads wrapped in their scrolls and dragged to the slaughter") could be understood as a

description of an actual event or as poetic language. They are described as אֲדָמוּ עֵצִים

סִוְרוֹ טָמְאָה קְרָאֵי לָמוֹ, which is from *Eicha* 4:7. The enemy says in II:7:

מִפְּנִינֵי סִפְרִים, which is from *Eicha* 4:15. This stanza is two lines longer than stanza I. The poem, like a train building

speed, is covering more and more ground, and rushing towards disaster.

The third stanza begins again with a reference to Jeremiah 13:7. Conventional lament language is again used as well as conventional mourning ritual - sackcloth and lamentation. Line 3 seems to be using language of *Eicha* 4:1,2. The poet mourns the "סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה" more precious than gold that he has seen ripped "desolate and forlorn" (an ironic reference to Isaiah 49:21). In the

next line, the poet tells us what this metaphor refers to: "Torah, Scriptures, Mishnah and

Aggadah". It is here that the poet gives the first clear piece of evidence that he has not been

describing the time of the Hurban but a post-mishnaic event. And yet, he describes the place of

catastrophe as *III:9* *הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָרַד הַיַּרְדֵּן* which is a

paraphrase of Jeremiah's description of Jerusalem (26:9). Whatever the place of disaster is, we

know it is understood as another Jerusalem.

Stanza IV keeps us guessing no longer. It begins in the conventional way and does not allow a breath to be taken until 41 lines later. No air is breathed in - only exhaled while speaking syllables ending in *rah*. The syllable at the end of each line is open, the mouth poised to scream.

The names of the communities are spoken and the dates of the destruction are given: Speyer on

the eighth day of Iyar on a shabbat; Worms on the 23 day of Iyar and on Rosh Chodesh Sivan,

and Mainz on the third day of Sivan, three days before Shavuot. The manner of death is

described as follows:

נֶאֱסַר בּוֹ יוֹרֵז נֶבֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִימֹן בְּמֵרֵא
(6) עַם יוֹרֵז עַם הַמְּיוֹרֵז יוֹרֵז שֶׁ בְּשַׁבָּת
קָרַע שֶׁ הַמְּיוֹרֵז בְּמֵרֵא (14)
הַשְּׁלִימֹן נֶבֶשׁ בְּאֵהָבָה קְשׁוּרָה (17)
כְּעֵתוֹ כִּתְרָה עַם רֵאשִׁית עֲדָרָה (19)
הַשְּׁלִימֹן נֶבֶשׁ עַם יוֹרֵז שֶׁ הַמְּיוֹרֵז (2)

There are only about eight biblical references in the forty-one lines. Two of them are used to describe the communities. Line eight quotes a tri cola from Psalm 103:20 (the words quoted by the poem are underlined):

בָּרַכְנוּ יְהוָה מִלְאֲכָיו גִּבְרֵי כַח עֲשֵׂי דְבָרוֹ

:לְשִׁמְעַ בְּקוֹל דְּבָרוֹ: The reference in line 21 comes from 2 Samuel 1:23:

מִנְּשָׂרִים קָלוּ מֵאֲרִיֹת גִּבְרוֹ: It now becomes clearer that the refrain is no mere reference to 2Samuel 1:12 but represents a prooftext for kedush hashem (and a rereading of Saul's death as martyrdom). The verse from Samuel describes the mourning for Saul (and Jonathan) who committed suicide. The actual verse reads:

עַל-עַם יְהוָה. וְעַל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי נָפְלוּ בַּחֶרֶב

The poet reverses the order putting עַל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל first, thus making his priorities clear!

Now, the function of the first three stanzas also becomes clearer. The poet has set us up. These stanzas could have referred to the Hurban except for a tantalizing clue included now and then. Now the reader understands that it was about the Jewish communities of Germany in the 12th century not the Hurban. The "kahal" referred to in verse 3 did not refer to "kahal yisrael" but the "kehilot haKodesh" of Speyer (stanza IV, line 11) and "kehal Mageinza" (line 20) and "Kehal VarMeeza" (line 12) The ambiguity allowed for the poem's inclusion as a kinah; it seemed to have shared the themes and the conventional language of *Eicha* and the other kinot. But ironically, much of the language used for the Hurban and what came to be known as Gezerat Tatnav are indeed interchangeable.

These communities the poet speaks about in stanza IV are idealized, romanticized and given heroic stature. Their deeds are similarly idealized and described euphemistically with no mention of the actual mechanics of slaughtering one's family or oneself (for a more forthcoming approach to detail, see Samson Bar Simson Crusade Chronicles). There is no description of the enemy or the events leading up to the decision. In only one case is the number of deaths given - ten people in Speyer. This detail may have been supplied because ten is a figurative number and

suggests Minyan (and the attendant halacha on when kiddush hashem is appropriate) as well as the ten martyred Rabbis of *Eleh Ezkerah*. The actual words "Kedush Hashem" are never used although line 14 comes close. The communities are not described as being guilty of any sin (unlike the Crusade Chronicles and unlike *Eicha*). There is no theodicy here. Justifying God is not the concern of the poet; immortalizing these communities is.

good

Lines 23 to 41 are especially significant in that they confront the issue of the status of the Hurban and Tisha B'Av vis à vis "Gezerat Tatnav". In lines 24 and 25, the poet claims that he is grieving for the "two Temples" and for the "miniature temples". The "miniature temples" are the synagogues and the communities of Speyer, Worms and Mainz. (This is the term used in Ezekiel 11:16 that the midrash understands as referring to synagogues.) It might appear that the poet is giving greater "kavod" to the Temples by terming the synagogues as "miniature temples".

Verses 26 to 32 describe the poet's experience on Shavuot, three days after the destruction of the community of Mainz. He calls Sivan: הַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּד לְיָגוֹן (line 27). This is a bitter parody of Esther 9:22: הַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּד לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה. The poet describes his hope of reenacting the giving of the Torah. However, on that Shavuot, the Torah was returned to its original dwelling place on high. Along with it went "its case and its cover, its expounder and examiner". The Torah returned but not alone; it went together with those of the martyred communities. Not even the Hurban caused the ungiving of the Torah.

The rest of stanza IV addresses the place of Tisha B'Av as a catchall day of mourning. It is surprising in its forthrightness. The poet clearly claims in line 34 and 35 that "

כִּי שְׂקוּלָם הָיָה יָמָם וְעַתָּה עֵרָב
נִשְׁבָּעַתְּ כִּי יִשְׁוֶה יָמָם וְעַתָּה עֵרָב

The poet is stating that this catastrophe is deserving of its own day of mourning! However, halacha prevents it (lines 36,37)! Therefore, he will mourn "hayom", on Tisha B'Av (32).

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play on "illemim: which is a play on "elim".) "Who is like you, O strong one, God, bearing sheaves".¹

Psalm 126 can be read as having two sections. The first (lines 1-3) is about the dream of the restoration of Zion/ restoring the captives to Zion. God will bring this to pass and there will be great joy. The second section (lines 4-6) is an appeal to God to make the dream a reality. An agricultural metaphor is used. Those who sow in tears (the suffering people of Zion) will reap in joy (when God brings redemption). The next line (6) repeats this idea:

וְבָכָה נִשְׂא מְשֻׁדָּה הֶזְרַע בְּאֶ-יְבוּא בְרִנָּה נִשְׂא אֶלְמָתָיו: | הֵלֵךְ יֵלֵךְ | Those who go out weeping bearing the seed for sowing (the suffering people) shall come home with shouts of joy carrying/bearing their sheaves (harvest as symbol of redemption).

The redemption so desperately desired in Psalm 126 is most probably a this worldly redemption - the intervention of God so as to end suffering. However, it can also be understood as a redemption to take place in the world to come. (This is certainly how the 19th century spiritual "Bringing in the Sheaves" presents it.)²

The God who is נִשְׂא אֶלְמָת is a God who is capable of redeeming his people. And yet, as the poet continues to say in line 13 and 14, this God remains silent, holds back, does not "gird himself in burning wrath" (paraphrasing Psalm 76:11) nor fight on behalf of Israel. There is an even more radical understanding of the description of God as נִשְׂא אֶלְמָת. In the psalm, it is the people who bear the sheaves, who are redeemed by God. If God is the bearer of the sheaves, it is God who redeems God's self and is restored to Zion while the people are left captive and suffering!

This phrase - מִי־כַמֹּד נִשְׂא has other allusions as well. A God who is נִשְׂא brings to mind the liturgical reference of a God who forgives - נִשְׂא עֵוֹן וְפָשַׁע וְחַטָּאתָה וְנִקָּה. The

¹ The carrying of sheaves symbolizing the harvest also reintroduces the motif of a few lines before, Shavuot.

² "Going forth with weeping, sowing for the Master, Though the loss sustained our spirit often grieves;
When our weeping's over, He will bid us welcome, We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.

liturgy, of course, is based on a conscious subversion of the Biblical text (Exodus 34:7):

נִשָּׂא עֵינָיו וְנִפְשָׁע וְחִטָּאָה וְנִקְהָ לֹא וְנִקְהָ פִקְדָּן | עֵינָיו אֲבוֹת עַל-בְּנֵיהֶם

The poet, in using the word נִשָּׂא, alludes to both the liturgical and biblical context, the tension between them and the tradition of subverting tradition.

The last verse borrows phrases primarily from Eicha, Jeremiah, Job, Psalms, Isaiah and Deuteronomy to express the poet's grief. The biblical references pile up, appearing one after the other as if there are no new words that the poet can use.[†] In lines 1 & 2, the "mishorer", the poet, has become a mourner, his "flute", his poetry, only weeps. This is an expression of the poet's deep personal suffering. The lines are choppy and short and rhythmic. It is very Jobian in its depiction of isolation and pain. The communities he previously memorialized are not mentioned. Instead, the poet has become the main character. This last stanza presents the poet as victim, witness and survivor.

However, as survivor he can only exist through grief. It is his fear that he will run out of tears (I:1) or will lose the strength or the capacity for life long grieving (VI:3). There is no cure and no comfort. In the penultimate line of *Eicha*, the people still turn to God, hoping for a restoration of their former intimate relationship: הַשִּׁיבֵנו יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנָשׁוּבָה (5:21). The poet asks the opposite - מִי יִתֵּן רֵאשִׁי מִיָּם (VI:10).

The question that began the poem - מי יתן ראשי מים is answered at the end of the poem: no one. The poet will run out of tears eventually. His only hope is that his weeping will have marked him - that the blisters on his cheeks will remain. He ends the poem with his usual refrain: a biblical quote. He therefore places himself and his experience back into the covenantal framework and reinforces his poem as a kinah for Tisha B'Av.

[†] Ellie Wiesel wrote in *A Jew Today*, "How is one to say, how is one to communicate that which by its very nature defies language?" (p.254)

The yearly observance of Tisha B'Av provided for the annual recitation of the kinot and therefore insured their survival¹. Yet, the poet consistently attempts to undermine and challenge the Hurban archetype. His reliance on Biblical references indicates that he can only speak from within the Biblical tradition but he often seeks to subvert the authority of the Biblical text. He does this not only by changing the Biblical quotes just slightly or altering the position of the words. He also does it by adding a word to the end of the Biblical quote. Some examples are:

(I,5) וְקָרַב קָרַב, קָרַב, קָרַב וְקָרַב
 (II,7) וְקָרַב מִן הַקָּרָב מִן הַקָּרָב מִן הַקָּרָב
 (VI,4) וְקָרַב מִן הַקָּרָב מִן הַקָּרָב מִן הַקָּרָב
 (VI,11) וְקָרַב מִן הַקָּרָב מִן הַקָּרָב מִן הַקָּרָב

In so doing, he intends to have the last word whenever possible. Perhaps too, this is why the poem is written in six stanzas/chapters, one more than *Eicha*.

The poet both speaks from within and struggles with traditional responses to catastrophe. His model is that of kiddush hashem as communal martyrdom without admission of sin. The Hurban model is that of destruction as divine punishment. He ultimately capitulates to tradition in order to take the victory of survival. One day a year, every year, year after year, the names of Speyer, Mainz, and Worms will be spoken. Every year, the poet will cry and will never run out of tears - as long as the Jewish people survive.

Excellent!

A+

I would appreciate a copy of this for my files
 David Lewin

¹ The Crusade Chronicle of Solomon Bar Simson was rediscovered and almost did not survive, possibly because it was not part of a liturgy.

25.

Would that my head were water,^{*}
and my eye a fount of flowing tears,
that I might spend all my days and nights weeping,¹
for my slaughtered children and infants,
and for the venerable oldsters of my congregation.
I call upon all of you to respond [to my cry], 'Vay! Ay!² Woe!³
And cry profusely³ and intensify your weeping!⁴
Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,
because they have fallen by the sword!⁴

My eye shall be filled with copious tears⁵
and I shall get me to the weeper's field.
I shall arouse the bitter of heart,
the confounded ones, to weep with me,
over the beautiful maidens and the tender lads,
wrapped in their scrolls and dragged to the slaughter.
Their appearance was ruddier⁶ than rubies,
[more dazzling] than sapphires and gems,
yet they were trampled and discarded like the mud in the streets.⁷
'Turn away from the unclean [Jew]!⁸
they called to each other,⁸ lest they come too close.
Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,
because they have fallen by the sword!

(1) Cf. Jeremiah 8:23. (2) Cf. Proverbs 23:29. (3) Cf. Ezra 10:1. (4) Cf. II Samuel 1:12.
(5) Jeremiah 13:17. (6) Eichah 4:7. (7) II Samuel 22:43. (8) Eichah 4:15.

families, occupations — in order to conquer the Holy Land they called Palestine, while the Jews themselves were filled with no such zeal to regain their own homeland! In heaven, this irony did not go unnoticed, but aroused a terrible denunciation against the Jewish people, and especially against the Jews of Worms and her neighboring communities.

The classic work on Jewish history, *Seder HaDoros*, by R. Yechiel Halperin, records the following observation in his entry for the year 5380 (1620).

The author of the commentary *Sefer Meirav Eynayim* (SMA) on the *Shulchan Aruch* explained why the Jewish community of Worms suffered far more persecution, pogroms and evil decrees than other congregations. That *kehillah* was founded by Jewish exiles who made their way to Germany following the Destruction of the First Temple. After seventy years of exile, many Jews returned from Babylon to Eretz Yisrael and Jerusalem, but none returned from Worms. The community in Jerusalem wrote to the *kehillah* in Worms and urged them to join their new settlement in Jerusalem... but the complacent Jews of Worms dismissed this invitation out of hand. Instead, they responded, 'You stay where you are in the

great Jerusalem, and we will continue to stay where we are in our little Jerusalem!' This arrogant response was due to the prosperity and prestige the Jews of Worms enjoyed in the eyes of the local gentiles and their princes.

The success of Worms was its undoing! The prosperity of the Jew in exile is nothing more than a Divine test to see whether it will cause the Jew to forget his homeland and his heritage. Worms and the Rhineland failed and suffered bitterly. In our own times, the vast majority of the German *kehillah* failed, because, as *Meshech Chochimah* (*Bechukosai*) observes, 'They began to call Berlin, Jerusalem!'

→ The Calamity of the First Crusade

On November 27, 1095, in Clermont (southeastern France) Pope Urban II called upon faithful Christians to join in arms to liberate the city of Jerusalem and its holy sites from the hands of the Moslem infidels who occupied it. Those who answered the call affixed crosses to their garments, and the campaign became known as *le Croisade* (from *croix*, French for cross), or the Crusade. At first, the Crusade seemed to pose no threat to the Jews who resided in peace with their Christian neighbors, but soon enough it became clear that the crusaders did not wish to wait until they reached far-off Palestine to avenge the

כה.

1 מי יתן ראשי מים ועיני מקור נוזלי,
2 ואבכה כל ימותי ולילי,
3 את חללי טפי ועוללי, וישירי קהלי,
4 נאתם ענו אבוי אוי ואלי,
5 ובכן בכה בכה רב והרב,
6 על בית ישראל ועל עם יהודה כי נפלו בהרב.

7 ודמו תדמע עיני ואלכה לי שדה בוכים,
8 נאבכה עמי מרי ללב הבוכים,
9 על בתולות היפות וילדים הרבים,
10 בספריהם נזכרים ולטבח נמשכים,
11 ארמו עצם מפנינים ספורים ונופכים,
12 כמו טיט חוצות נדרשים ונשלכים,
13 סורו טמא קראו למוי מלקרב,
14 על בית ישראל ועל עם יהודה כי נפלו בהרב.

— Would that my head were water. Significantly, this is the first *kinnah* recited on the Ninth of Av that is apparently unrelated to the destruction of the two Temples. Indeed, this elegy mourns the calamity that befell the Jewish communities of the Rhineland — Worms, Speyer and Mainz (Mayence) — in the year 1096, during the First Crusade, over one thousand years after the destruction of the Second Temple. The inclusion of this lament in the Tishah B'Av ritual serves to demonstrate that the source and cause of all Jewish tragedies in exile can and must be traced back to the Destruction of our Temple. The following incident illustrates this concept vividly.

When the Jewish people became aware of the awesome devastation that befell our nation at the hands of the murderous Nazis in World War II, many sought to establish a new day of national mourning to commemorate *Churban Europa*. The contemporary Torah leaders were consulted. Among the responses was that of the *Brisker Rav*, R. Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, who said that the reply to this question lies in the *kinnah* before us. Why didn't the great Rabbis and Sages of that generation — among them the greatest of the *Rishonim*, including Rashi — establish a new day of national mourning to commemorate that *new* tragedy? The author of this *kinnah* addresses this question and offers this insight:

Please take to your hearts to compose a bitter eulogy, / because their massacre is deserving of mourning and rolling in dust / as was the

burning of the House of our God, its Hall and its Palace. / However, we cannot add a (new) day (of mourning) over ruin and conflagration, / nor may we mourn any earlier — only later. / Instead, today (on Tishah B'Av), I will arouse my sorrowful wailing, / and I will eulogize and wail and weep with a bitter soul / and my groans are heavy from morning until evening.

Thus, the essential purpose of this *kinnah* is to drive home this lesson: There are really no *new* tragedies befalling Israel. All of our woes stem from one tragic source — the Destruction of the Temple on Tishah B'Av. To establish a new day of mourning would detract from the significance of Tishah B'Av and obscure its lesson and message. (See Rashi to II Chronicles 35:25.)

This *kinnah* also answers other major questions. Why does the exile continue? Why does God visit fresh calamities upon His people? Where have we gone astray?

One of the main reasons for the continuation of our exile is because Jews are often quite content and comfortable in their adopted, alien homelands and have all but lost their desire to return to the poverty and hardships of Eretz Yisrael. Slowly the Jew ceases to identify with his true home, the Holy Land, and begins to feel intense pride in his citizenship in his new country.

The destruction of the Jewish community of Worms in the German Rhineland was the work of the crusaders. How ironic! The crusaders were willing to leave everything behind — homes,

My eyes will shed tears¹ and I will wail
and thus bestirring [friends to comfort me],
and I will call them to cry, to don sackcloth and to eulogize
that which is more precious than fine gold, more desirable than gold,
whose glory is concealed within.²

honored as the most cherished vessel,
and now I see it ripped, desolate, forlorn³ —
[namely,] the Torah, the Scriptures, the Mishnah and the Aggadah.
Raise your voice and moan and make this pronouncement,
'Where is the Torah and the student who studied it?'

Behold, the place is desolate and no one dwells therein!⁴
Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,
because they have fallen by the sword!

Water will stream from my eyelids, running over with tears,⁵
as I bitterly bemoan the slain victims of Speyer.*
It happened on the eighth day of the second month [Iyar],
on the day of tranquility [the Sabbath].

My calm was transformed into a destructive tempest.
Pleasant young men⁶ were murdered
with splendid, venerable oldsters.

They assembled together and [decided]
to surrender their souls in reverence,
for the unification of the One and Only Name,
they declared the unity of God with fortitude.
Strong warriors, swift to fulfill His word.⁷
And my ministers and my youths expired
— altogether they numbered ten.

In my bitter agony and sadness, I compose elegies,
as I remember today the murder of the holy congregations;
the community of Worms,* proven and chosen.
Talmudic masters of the land, their purity unsullied.

(1) Jeremiah 13:17. (2) Psalms 45:14. (3) Isaiah 49:21. (4) Cf. Jeremiah 26:9.
(5) Cf. 9:17. (6) Ezekiel 23:12. (7) Psalms 103:20.

the assembled worshippers were able to repel their
attack. Frustrated, the frenzied mob threw itself
upon any Jew it could find outside the syna-
gogue. Altogether they murdered ten men. In
addition they attacked one woman who was
given the choice of death or conversion. She
gladly chose the former and died a martyr's death
and proved to be an example for many other Jews
who preferred to sanctify God's Name in death,
rather than to abandon Him in life.

קב"ל ה'תש"א — The community of Worms. On the
twenty-third of Iyar [Sunday, May 18, 1096] a
large force of crusaders, led by Count Emicho,
mercilessly attacked the Jews of Worms who had
remained confidently in their homes. There they
felt safe, relying on the promises of protection

slain by the crusaders and their small children
were seized for forced baptism. Jewish homes
were pillaged and destroyed. The greedy mob
even stripped the clothing from their victims'
corpses, leaving them naked. Eventually, some
Jews who had found refuge in the bishop's palace
managed to send clothes to cover their shame.

But for the Jews of Worms the suffering was
not over. God had singled them out for double
tragedy. On the following Sunday, Rosh
Chodesh Sivan [May 25,] the crusaders and local
rabble attacked the bishop's palace to kill the
many Jews who had taken refuge there. After
fierce combat the crusaders prevailed and slew
every Jew they could find. When the attack
came, the victims were in the midst of reciting
Psalms 113-118, with God's name on

וְהִרְדּוּ עֵינַי דְּמַעוֹת וְאֵילִילָה וְאֲנוּדָה,
ג' וְלִבִּי וְלִחְטוֹר שֶׁק אֶמְרָא לְהַסְפִּידָה,
ד' מִפּוֹ יִקְרָה וְתִבֵּב חֲמוּדָה,
ה' פְּנִימָה כְּבִידָה כְּבוֹד כֹּל כְּלֵי חֲמֻדָה,
ו' אֵינִי יְהִי לְרֹדֵעָה וְהַמְשַׁנָּה וְאֲנוּדָה,
ז' הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת וְהַמְשַׁנָּה וְאֲנוּדָה,
ח' עֲנֵנו וְקוֹלְנוּ וְאֵת לְהַגְיִידָה,
ט' אֵי תוֹרָה תִּלְמִיד וְהַלְמוּדָה,
י' הֵלָא הַמְקוּם מֵאִין יוֹשֵׁב חֶרֶב,
יא עַל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל עַם יִהוּדָה כִּי נִפְלוּ בְּחֶרֶב.

IV
ג' וְאֶפְעַפֵּי יָלֹד מִיָּם דְּמַעַי לְהַגְיִידָה,
ד' וְאֶקְוֶנוּ מִר עַלֵי הַרְוֵגֵי אֲשַׁפִּירָה,*
ה' בְּשַׁנֵּי בְּשִׁמוֹתָהּ כּוּ בְיוֹם מַרְגּוּעַ הַקְּרָה,
ו' מַרְגּוּעַ נִחְלַפּוּ לְהַכְעִירָה,
ז' נִהְרָגוּ בַּחֲזֵרֵי חֲמֻדֵי וְיִשְׁיֵשִׁי הַדְּרָה,
ח' נֶאֱסַפּוּ יָחַד נִפְשָׁם הַשְּׁלִימוּ בְּמִרְאָה,
ט' עַל יְהוּדָה שֶׁם הַמַּיְחָד יִחְדּוּ שֶׁם בְּגֻבּוּרָה,
י' גְּבוּרֵי לֶחַם עוֹשֵׂי דְבָרֵי לְמַהְרָה,
יא וְכֹהֲנֵי וְעַלְמֵי נִגְעוּ בְּלֹהִים עֲשָׂרָה.
יב וְבִמְרָ יִגְוֵי וְעֲצָבֵי יִלָּל אַחֲבִירָה,
יג קְהֵלוֹת הַקְּרָשׁ הַרִיגוֹתָם הַיּוֹם בְּזֻכְרָה,
יד קָהַל וְרַמְיוֹא* בַּחֲזוּנָה וּבְחֻזְרָה,
טו גְּאֵנֵי אֶרֶץ וְנִקְבֵי סְדוּרָה,

blood of their savior'. In truth, it was their envy of the prosperous Jewish communities that incited the vulgar rabble and the greedy nobility to punish 'the murderers of their lord' whenever they passed. It was rumored that the French leader of the Crusades, Godfrey of Bouillon, had taken a solemn vow that he would avenge the blood of the crucifixion with the blood of the Jews and that he would not tolerate even one Jewish soul remaining alive.

Early in the year 1096, the French communi-
ties, threatened with extinction if they did not submit to baptism, called upon the great Jewish communities on the Rhine to ordain a day of public fasting and prayer. The Rhenish Jews
submitted and prayed fervently for the welfare of

their French brethren. However, they themselves felt perfectly secure, enjoying as they did the special favor of the Emperor and the local nobility. But all too soon, the frenzied mobs of crusaders poured into Germany, thirsty for Jewish blood, and hungry for Jewish riches.

In the early spring, in the weeks between Pesach and Shavuot, violence broke out and atrocities escalated. The three Jewish communi-
ties of Speyer, Worms and Mainz felt the main brunt of the carnage, and their calamity is described in this *kinna* (see commentary below).

הַיּוֹם אֶעֱבֹדָה — The slain victims of Speyer. On the Sabbath, the eighth of Iyar [May 3, 1096], the crusaders surrounded the synagogue in Speyer. They were unable to breach its fortifications, and

Twice they sanctified the One and Only Name in reverence.
On the twenty-third day of the month of Ziv [Iyar],
they were purified,

and in the third month [Sivan],
while reciting the Hallel [on Rosh Chodesh] in song,
they surrendered their soul, bound up with love.
I moan over them with a wailing cry. Saturated [with tears]
those adorned with a perfect crown upon their heads.

For the towering personalities of
the distinguished community of Mainz,*
quicker than eagles, stronger than lions,²
they surrendered their souls while declaring
[God's] unity and His awesome Name.

For them, I will scream out a shattering cry,
over my two Temples whose foundation were destroyed on this day,
and for the ruins of my miniature sanctuaries³
and houses of Torah study.

In the third month [Sivan], on the third day,
more misery and misfortune were added,
in this month which was turned into agony and grief.
I had hoped that on the day the Law was given [Shaavuos]
I would renew my fortune [in the merit of the Torah],
but on the very day it was given it was returned.
It arose on high, [back to] its dwelling place,
together with its cover and its case, its expounder and its examiner,
those who study it and reviewed it in the darkness [of night]
as by the light [of day].

Please take to your hearts⁴ to compose a bitter eulogy,
because their massacre is deserving of mourning and rolling in dust
as was the burning of the House of our God, its Hall and its Palace.
However, [we] cannot add a [new] day
[of mourning] over ruin and conflagration,
nor may [we] mourn any earlier — only later.
Instead, today [on Tishah B'Av], I will arouse my sorrowful wailing,
and I will eulogize and wail and weep with a bitter soul,
and my groans are heavy from morning until evening.

Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,
because they have fallen by the sword!

(1) I Kings 6:1. (2) Cf. II Samuel 1:23. (3) Cf. Ezekiel 11:16. (4) Cf. Chagga! 2:18.

crusaders on those two Sundays in Worms.

קטל קנגאזא — The ... community of Mainz. Terribly alarmed by the massacre at Speyer and Worms, the Jews of Mainz petitioned for the bishop's protection and paid him 400 pieces of

his multitudes arrived at the gates of the city, the burghers were only too happy to welcome the crusaders and join in their attack on the Jews. The populace led the crusaders to all the Jewish hiding places. The Jews, led by R' Klonimot ben R' Meshullam, valiantly resisted, but were our

penitence.

14 פעמים קדשו שם הפיקוד במונא.
15 בעשרים ושלשה בחדש זיו לטהרה,
16 ובהחדש השלישי בקריאת הלל לשוהרה,
17 השלימו נפשם באהבה לשוהרה,
18 אהימה עליהם כבכי ילל לחשרה,
19 כלולי כתר על ראשם לעפורה.

20 ועל אהירי קהל מגנצא יהודהרה,
21 מפשרים קלו מאריות להתפורה,
22 השלימו נפשם על יחוד שם הונרא,
23 ועליהם ועמת שכר אשערה,
24 על שני מקדשי יסודם כהיום ארערה,
25 ועל חרבות מעט מקדשי ומדשי התורה.

26 בחדש השלישי בשלישי נוסף לדאבון ומארה,
27 החדש אשר נהפך לגון וארה,
28 ביום מתן דת שפירתי להתאשרה,
29 וביום נתינתה כמו כן אז חזרה,
30 עלתה לה למרום למקום מרונה,
31 עם תיקה נהרתקה והידרשה וחולקה,
32 לומדיה ושונה באישון כמו באורה,

33 שימו נא על לבבכם מספר מר לקשרה,
34 פי שקולה הרינתם להתאבל ולהתעפורה,
35 בשרפת בית אלהינו האולם והפירה,
36 וכי אין להוסיף מועד שכר ותבערה,
37 נאין להקדים וילתי אעורה,

38 תחת כן היום ליתי אעורה,
39 ואנחתי פנה מפקר וער ערכי,
40 נאנחתי פנה ואכפה בנפש מרה,
41 על בית ישראל ועל עם יהודה כי נפלו בתרב.

their lips they sanctified His Name. A youth named Simchah Cohen planned to avenge his father and seven brothers who had been murdered by the crusaders. He pretended that he would accept baptism, and was taken to the

sacrament, he whipped out a concealed knife and lashed out at those around him, stabbing the bishop's nephew in the act. Needless to say, the brave youth was torn to pieces by the infuriated bystanders.

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Over these I do cry¹ and my heart moans deeply,
and I summon the wailing-women and the skilled ones.²
'Ay li', 'Ay lay', they all cry with intense feeling.

Is there any pain which compares with my pain?³
Outside the [avenging] sword renders parents childless,
while terror stalks the inner chambers.⁴

My dead bodies, corpses of the sword,
are strewn about naked, both male and female.
Their cadavers rotting⁵ for the wild beasts of the land

and for the animals —
suckling baby with hoary old man,⁶ young men and young maidens.
My tormentors ridicule them and humiliate them intensely.

'Where is their God,' taunt they,
'the Rock in Whom they sought refuge' until death?
Let Him come and save and restore souls!

Who is like You, O strong One, God,⁸
Who patiently bears the bundles⁹ [of their iniquities]?
Will You remain silent and hold back,¹⁰
not to gird Yourself in burning wrath,¹¹

when those who mock me say, 'If indeed there is a God,
let Him fight!¹² [on your behalf]!
Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,
because they have fallen by the sword!

My eyes, my eyes, run with water!¹³
For our singer has turned to mourning,¹⁴
my flute has changed over to the sound of weeping,¹⁵
without relief or composure.
And is there none to revive me with a strong embrace?¹⁷

[God's] wrath went forth against me,
while a storm [of anger] gathered¹⁸ [to harm me].
The cruel enemy²⁰ consumed and mutilated me.¹⁹
My bones he shattered,²¹ strew and pulverized.
He trampled all my heroes,²² [who were my] navel and umbilicus.
There is no bandage or medicine from which to choose.
[because] my wound is mortal,²³ beyond remedy or cure.

Therefore I said, 'Leave me alone with my bitterness,
so that with the weeping²⁴ of my tears, I will blister my cheeks.²⁵
Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,
because they have fallen by the sword!

(1) Eichah 1:16. (2) Cf. Jeremiah 9:16. (3) Cf. Eichah 1:12. (4) Cf. Deuteronomy 32:25. (5) Isaiah 5:25.
(6) Deuteronomy 32:25. (7) Cf. 32:37. (8) Cf. Psalms 89:9. (9) Cf. 126:6. (10) Cf. Isaiah 42:14.
(11) Cf. Psalms 76:11. (12) Judges 6:31. (13) Eichah 1:16. (14) 5:15. (15) Job 30:31. (16) Cf. Isaiah 51:19.
(17) Cf. 64:6. (18) Jeremiah 30:23. (19) Cf. 51:34. (20) Numbers 10:9. (21) Eichah 3:4.
(22) 1:15. (23) Jeremiah 15:18. (24) Isaiah 22:4. (25) Eichah 1:2.

1 וְעַל אֵלֶּה אָנֹכִי בּוֹכֵה וְלִבִּי נוֹדֵם וְהִימּוֹת,
2 וְאֵתְּכָא לְמִקְוֹנוֹת וְאֵל הַמְּכַמּוֹת,
3 אֵלֵי וְאֵלֶּה בְּלִים הוֹמּוֹת,
4 הַיֵּשׁ מְכַאֵב לְמְכַאֵבֵי לְדַמּוֹת,
5 מִחוּץ תִּשְׁפֹּל תֶּרֶב וּמִתְּרָרִים אַמּוֹת,
6 חֲלָלִי חֲלָלִי חֲרָב מוֹטְלִים עֲרַמִּים וְעַרְמוֹת,
7 וְנִבְלָתָם בְּסוּחָה לַחֲיֹת אֲרָץ וּלְפִתְחֵי מוֹת,
8 יִזְנֹק עִם אִישׁ שִׂיבֹה עֲלֵמִים נַעֲלָמוֹת.
9 מְתַעֲתָעִים בְּמוֹ מוֹנֵי וּמְרַבִּים כָּל מוֹת,
10 אֵי אֵלֶיְכֶמוּ אֲמָרוּ צוּר חֲסִין בּוֹי עַד מוֹת,
11 יִבֵּא וְיִשְׁעֵי וְיִחְוִיר נְשָׁמוֹת,

12 חֲסִין יְהִי מִי כְמוֹךָ נוֹשֵׂא אֲלֵמוֹת,
13 הַחֲמִשָּׁה וְהַתְּאֵפְקִים וְלֹא תִחְגּוּר חַמּוֹת,
14 בְּאִמּוֹר אֵלֵי מַלְעֵינִי אִם אֲלֹהִים הוּא יִרְבֵּי,
15 עַל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל עַם יְהוּדָה כִּי נִפְלוּ בְּחֶרֶב.

16 וְעֵינֵי עֵינֵי יוֹרְדָה מְיוֹסִים כִּי נִהְפְּרוּ לְאַבְלֵי מִשׁוּרָה,
17 וְעַבְדֵי לְקוֹל בּוֹכִים מְלֵהְפִיג וּלְקֶבֶר,
18 כִּמִּי יִתֵּר לִי וְכִי מִחֻזֵּק לְהִתְעוֹדֵרָה,
19 חֲמָה כִּי יֵצֵא וְסָעַר מִתְּגוּרָה,
20 אֲבָלְנֵי הַמְּמַנִּי הָצַר הַצּוֹדֵר,
21 שֹׁפֵר עֲצֻמוֹתַי וּזְרָר וּמְפָרָה,
22 סָקָה כָּל אַבְיֵרַי הַטּוֹבוֹר וְהַשָּׂרָה,
23 אֶרְטִיה וּמְזוֹר אֵין לְכָר,
24 מִפְּנֵי אֲנוּשָׁה בְּאֵין מִתְעַל וּמְזוֹרָה,
25 סַעַל כֵּן אֲמַרְתִּי שְׁעוּ מִנִּי אֲמָרָה,
26 וְיִבְכִיָּה דְמַעְזֵי עַל לְחֵיָּה לְעֹבֵר,
27 עַל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל עַם יְהוּדָה כִּי נִפְלוּ בְּחֶרֶב.

ensued. The victims, more than one thousand pure Jewish souls, were ignominiously thrown into nine large ditches for mass burial. Throughout the spring and early summer, the Crusaders continued to maraud and sack once proud and venerable Jewish communities, many of which had stood for over a thousand years. They brought death and destruction to Cologne, Trier, Regensburg, Metz and Prague. It is estimated that over 5,000 Jews lost their lives during the First Crusade. But worse than that, the Crusades introduced the idea of organized, massive, widespread terror against the Jews on a vast, sweeping scale — an idea that would continue, and find its ultimate, horrible expression in the awesome Nazi Holocaust.