

The Sabbath preceding Tisha B'Av (the ninth of the month of Av) is a very solemn day on the Jewish calendar. Tisha B'Av is the day when both temples were destroyed, Solomon's and Herod's. However in the midst of our greatest suffering and deepest mourning, we need to exercise the discipline of rejoicing, especially on Shabbat.

We need to rejoice in at least three things. **FIRST**, we need to rejoice in the goodness of G-d: tears may last a season, but His love is unceasing forever (Is. 54:7, 8). **SECOND**, we need to rejoice in His presence and protection (Rom. 8:32-39; Ps. 23), walking with us through our suffering. **THIRD**, we rejoice in our eternal reward, which far outweighs our light affliction of the moment (Rom. 8:18 and 2 Corin. 4:16-18).

Today, I want to give you a meditation on suffering taken from two paces: from the **Book of Lamentations** and from the **Book of Pizza Deliveries** (First Spicy Chicken, verse, hold the onions).

There are five books, or scrolls, which are read on special occasions on the Hebrew Calendar:

1. Song of Songs	Shir HaShirim	Pesach/Passover
2. Ruth	Rut	Shavuot/Pentecost
3. Lamentations	Eichah	Tisha B'Av
4. Ecclesiastes	Kohelet	Sukkoth/Tabernacles
5. Esther	Ester	Purim

Tisha B'Av occurs this Tuesday, and I would like to incorporate a reading from the Lamentations as part of today's mediation: **Lam. 3:19-39**

G-d never loses control and knows where we are and what is going on in our lives. The question we need to ask is whether we know where we are in G-d and what He wants to be going on in our lives.

This brings me to my Meditations from the **Book of Pizza Delivery**. As many of you know, I do not have a radio in my car, so as I drive around Saint Albert, finding addresses, I spend time praying and meditating. I do not wander into a trance and become a road hazard, I drive with caution and understand that my life is about more than just earning a living, because we are all strangers and pilgrims on this earth with one mandate: I Peter 2:9-11 (Matt. 28:19, 20)

So here are five thoughts for us to meditate on this Shabbat Chazon. **The first one**, I have already shared. Our lives are about more than just earning a living (Jer. 9:23, 24 and Eccl. 12:15, 16) and one day we shall all give an account of how we have spent the time and resources which G-d has entrusted us with.

Number Two: Therefore, being persuaded of the terror and joy of the L-rd, let us understand that everything which happens to us in our lives at least has G-d's permission and that everything which He allows to happen to us has a purpose, a lesson, has a reaction which He wants us to adopt as a sign of both our FAITH and our OBEDIENCE. **So always and in everything, look for the lesson.** G-d will never leave, nor forsake us.

Now I do not want you to "spiritualize" every detail of your life, so that you turn the everyday events of your life into major crisis events of great significance. Sometimes a flat tire just means a flat tire. Look for the lesson, do not make one up.

Number Three: Learn to listen to the inner voice. When I deliver pizzas, I ring the door bell or I knock, and while there may be great noise outside, if I listen carefully, I can hear the inner sounds of someone coming to the door. If I step back a few feet, I can no longer hear the noise. No one passing on the street can hear the noise. No one passing in a car can hear the noise. It is an inner noise, a quiet noise. When we accepted the L-rd into our hearts, His still small voice took up residence in our hearts.

If ever we cannot hear this voice, one of three things has happened. Either we have moved too far away from the voice, or we are distracted by the noise of life, or we are not walking with the L-rd and need to repent and return to Him. But, instead of standing on the steps of His presence, sometimes we are playing in the yard, or are walking on the road, or driving down the road. We need to regularly stop what we are doing and listen to the inner voice.

Number Four: When I first started delivering, I did not know Saint Albert very well, nor did I know how to prepare my orders, and I certainly did not know how to ring them in on the computer, you know, those demon possessed, anti-Semitic machines which are always picking on me. Well, with the help of a map, and of some kind people I work with, I have gradually gotten to the place where I can do my job comfortably, as part of a routine.

Build good habits, build a comfort zone, fill your life with stability, because what you do from habit, what you do without having to think about every detail, sets you free to both apply more energy to each task, and also to see the lesson and hear the inner voice. *Living in perpetual crisis is not the will of the L-rd for us.* The one thing our Messiah never did when He walked among us was panic, or run around.

Even the Apostle Paul lived a peaceful life, in the midst of great trials. How? By building stable daily routines and by designing new ones for every situation we encounter in our lives. We are naturally creatures of habit, who do not really do our best work, until we have turned each action, each task, into a habit, into a learned response.

Number Five: When our lives blow up, when our lives are destroyed, when we go through times of great trial and even disaster, we need to do three things: **First** of all we need to survive (you have to survive, if you want to thrive). **Second** of all, we need seek the L-rd until we hear the inner voice and understand the lesson/response He wants from us. Then, **third, we need to rebuild our lives into a series of stable routines/habits and recover until we are stronger, until we feel better.**

When our lives are ripped up by the roots, we need to be replanted. When our lives are cut off at ground level, we need to re-grow. When we are struck with a great flood which washes us away, we need to wait until the flood is over and repeat steps One to four (you know, our lives are about more than making a living, we need to look for the lesson/response, listen for the inner voice, and rebuild a comfort zone).

When our lives are struck with great loss and a frosty winter of adversity sets in on us for the long haul, we need to dig in and go into hibernation (of aestivation, a period of inactivity) until the weather in our lives improves – we need to let the seasons turn).

You see, we are not always open to change in our lives. Our hearts may change slowly or quickly, and we need to learn to recover, to regroup before we go charging over the horizon in search of fame and glory, only to drop from exhaustion, because we don't know how to slow down, take a break, or sit at the Saviour's feet.

You all know why I work six part time jobs, but you need to know how I work them. I **rest** while I deliver. I **rest** while I tutor and counsel and teach the Sunday School for ECBC. I **rest** when I work for the temp agency and I **rest** while I serve the L-rd as the rabbi of our shul. What kind of rest? Prov. 4:23 says to cherish our hearts above all things. Ps. 127 says not to sit up late and rise early in anxiety. ***I am resting my heart, and sometimes my head and sometimes my body.***

I go through moments of panic and even sometimes rage and grumble, but the L-rd is patient with me and wants to teach me to overcome (Rom. 5:3-5) through the way of escape He always provides (I Cor. 10:13). When I do it His way, I win, His way. When I blow it, He brings me back to the place where I can rest, recover and learn to win. ***We serve a G-d of victory and not of defeat.***

So as we remember the disasters of Israel and even some of our own disasters, let me conclude with two thoughts. (1) **Learn to wait upon the L-rd for the strength to live and the energy to change.** Also (2) **learn to see life from an eternal, spiritual perspective.** Not spiritualizing everything into an exaggerated personal soap opera, but following steps One to Five and you shall find rest for your souls, whether you rest in palaces of gold and silver, or whether they feed your beaten body into an oven – or as you go about the mundane task of the business of living (Matt. 11:28-30).

Let's review:

Step One: Realize that your life is not about what you do to earn a living, it is about walking with G-d.

Step Two: Look for the lesson/response G-d will always build into every circumstance of your life.

Step Three: Learn to listen to the inner voice of His presence and do not become distracted by the noise of life. He is home and will open doors for you to go through.

Step Four: Learn to live in your comfort zone of **good habits** and **stable routines.**

Step Five: When your life explodes or is smashed to pieces, survive, recover, wait, rebuild good habits and stable routines, for this is whole duty of man.

Thus ends the lessons from the Book of Pizza Delivery, First Spicy Chicken, verse hold the onions.

Let's pray.