



It is possible to do everything G-d wants you to do and not to be intimate with G-d. You know, beautiful friends, Mount Sinai is where G-d told us what to do. But Jerusalem, the Holy Temple, is where we are intimate with G-d. The Holy Temple is the headquarters for being close to G-d and to each other. But when the house is destroyed, there is no place to be intimate anymore. And gevalt! Are we longing and crying to be intimate with G-d, with every Jew, with every word of the Torah, and, one day, with the whole world...On Tisha b'Av the Messiah comes. On Tisha b'Av until the Six Million you only heard the sound of the destruction of the Temple; you could not hear the footsteps of the Messiah. Today, the voice of destruction gets further and further away, the voice of the coming of the Messiah gets closer and closer. Let it be this year that the whole world will be fixed and G-d's holy intimacy comes back into the world and into our lives. You know, beautiful friends, I'm so proud of our moshav and our shul because they are filled with prayers, with so much dancing and joy, but also with so many tears begging G-d for intimacy with every word of the Torah with every Jew, with every human being, with all of nature. I have a feeling it will be this year.

*Reprinted from Cong Kehillat Jacob News 5752*

*Grief*

*I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless;  
 That only men incredulous of despair,  
 Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air  
 Beat upward to God 's throne in loud access  
 Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness,  
 In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare  
 Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare  
 Of the absolute heavens. Deep hearted man, express  
 Grief for thy dead in silence like to death-  
 Most like a monumental statue set  
 In everlasting watch and moveless woe  
 Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.  
 Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:  
 it could weep, it could arise and go.*

-Elizabeth Barrett Browning

**Why there is no confession or supplication on the 9th of Ab**

*Normally, on a fast day, we say Viddui (confession) and Tehinna (supplications). On Tisha B'Av, however, one of the saddest days in the Jewish calendar, we do not say any supplications, putting it on a par with Holidays. Why is this? The answer is that Tisha B'Av is, indeed, considered as a Mo'ed (Holiday). Even though the Beth Hammiqdash (Temple) was destroyed on that day, nevertheless, the Jewish people were saved from extinction. G-d, in His infinite mercy, poured his wrath on wood and stone instead. We see the kindness of G-d, that even in a time of anger, He remembers the Jewish people in Mercy. The day that the Beth Hamikdash was destroyed (Tisha B'Av) is the day when Messiah was born. The reason that it is so, is to show us that the punishment that came at this time was not because of hatred or cruelty, Heaven forbid, but is likened to a father who punishes a child out of love, in order to put him back on the right path.<sup>1</sup>*

**Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe**

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<sup>1</sup> *Nehamath Sion on Meghillath Eikha, Perek Beh, Pasuq Zahn, Perek Geemal, Pasuq Lamahd Beh*

Grief and intimacy are not good bedfellows. In our Sacred Texts of grief and national sorrow Lamentations or Eichah represents that book in the Hagiography that reflects national grief like none other. It is the source text for Midrash to Eichah that spells out some of the most daring theological musings in rabbinic literature<sup>2</sup>. In this essay I reflect on the road map that travels from Biblical text through Midrash and on to later modern views of grief and recovery in painting (Chagall) as well as Hassidic thought.

## 1. Biblical Text

In the following ways at least, the book of Lamentations may serve as a **theological resource**:

1. These poems are a resource for times of crisis. **They legitimate grief** that is intricately reflected and self-regarding, and they do not encourage sufferers to a hasty confidence in the goodness of God. They do not urge that the horror of disaster should be experienced only shallowly.
2. The poet is **not shy of holding God accountable for the disaster**. Even when it is obvious that Jerusalem has been overwhelmed by an army of Babylonians, the poet regards God as the first cause of the disaster. And even though he acknowledges that his people have deserved what has happened to them, God has still had some choice over whether he would act at this time and in this way.
3. **The moment of hope** arises from a recollection of the past experience of God's goodness, not from the misery of the present or from the cry of despair of the moment. The cry to God for deliverance may be a motive for God to act, but it offers no kind of guarantee that he will.
4. Repentance is not seen as a way to persuade God to be gracious, since God is free to be gracious or not as he chooses. Teshuvah is understood in the book of Lamentations to be a **proper accompaniment of thanksgiving for restoration**.
5. In the end, the possibility must be reckoned with that God has come to the end of a road with his people, and may not again deliver them. Otherwise, if God has no freedom, if God is utterly predictable, God is a tool of humans. Please think of the 20th century horrors and genocide as we travel down this textual road map together today.

**Theme and Purpose**—There are three themes that run through the five laments of Jeremiah. <sup>3</sup>The most prominent is the **theme of mourning over Jerusalem's holocaust**. The Holy City has been laid waste and desolate—God's promised judgment for sin has come. In his sorrow, Jeremiah speaks for himself, for the captives, and sometimes for the personified city. **The second theme is a confession of sin and acknowledgment of God's righteous and holy judgment upon Judah**. The third theme is least prominent but very important: **it is a note of hope in God's future restoration of His people**. Hashem has poured out His wrath, but in His mercy He will be faithful to His covenant promises. "*Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness*" (3:22–23).

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<sup>2</sup> see my PhD Thesis "Imaging/Imagining the Divine" Brandeis University 2000

<sup>3</sup> Is it mere coincidence that there are five thematic poems in Canticles as well! (see Malbim)

## Poem 1 (Lamentations 1): The Widowed Jerusalem

The scene depicted here is Jerusalem after its fall to the Babylonians in 587 BCE.

1:1-11 The Widowed Jerusalem

1:12-22 Jerusalem's Appeal

## Poem 2 (Lamentations 2): Hashem's Anger and the Impossibility of Comfort

2:1-10 Hashem's Anger against Jerusalem

2:11-17 The Poet's Incapacity to Comfort

2:18-22 The Cry for God's Mercy on the Children!

## Poem 3 (Lamentations 3): When the Mood Changes: "Ani Ha-Gever"

3:1-21 A Man Who Has Seen Affliction under the Rod of God's Wrath

3:22-33 Yet Hashem's Mercies Never Cease

3:34-66 What of Repentance?

## Poem 4 (Lamentations 4): Casting the Blame

4:1-11 Jerusalem's Inhabitants

4:12-16 Jerusalem's Priests and Prophets

4:17-20 Jerusalem's King

4:21-22 Jerusalem's Enemies

## Poem 5 (Lamentations 5): Expectations of Hashem: Hope

Often elsewhere in the Tanach the response to grief is **silence**:

Yaakov's silence when he heard the news of Dinah's abduction and rape. The brothers have a lot to say, but Yaakov says nothing-- until after Simeon and Levi take matters into their own hands and collectively punish the entire town of Shechem. This injustice he speaks to, but the tragedy of his own child calls forth no words, no thoughts, nothing for us to ruminate on as a reflection of our own tragedies except silence.

Where else in Torah do we see a **grieving parent** unable to bear witness except through silence? Aaron, at the deaths of his sons Nadav and Avihu. This horrendous thing happens to them in front of their father and the whole assembly of Yisroel, and what does the Torah say? "Aaron was silent."

Sometimes, our grief is so overwhelming, the shock and tragedy is unspeakable. There are no words for these moments. **Silence itself is the loudest statement.** Where then do we go after the silence? Simeon and Levi take silence as a failure to action and channel it into anger and rage.<sup>4</sup> Aaron has no choice in his next actions and is obligated to anoint his younger son and continue the priestly rite. What after that? He is never the same again, and neither is the priestly mantle he conferred on his lineage.

Perhaps this is part of our mission to become a nation of priests, where each and every one of us must speak the truth of our silence, and in so doing help elevate those struggling around us. **This is a large part of the narrative process.** A communal gleaning of our shared wisdom as we struggle individually (yaakov) and collectively (yisroel) to come to healthier mechanisms within our self and the people. Silence for a moment gives space and time for absorption. Silence as a practice breeds isolation and imbalance internally and externally and creates a system in which others tell us how to process the reality of our lives and community.

*Eichah is as much about the open spaces and the silences in grief...*

*it leaves as many questions unanswered about God and justice and good as it questions...which brings us to Midrash.*

*In our next section of this journey through the textual strata of rabbinic understanding we delve deeper into the subtext of Torah-the midrash. Here the Rabbinic imagination is allowed to ferment and reveal the hidden nuances of the text. We will look at parallel texts about grief.*

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<sup>4</sup> Jacob's silence is contrasted with his actions (in Midrash) following the birth of Osnat the love-child of Dinah and Schechem. He sends her down to Egypt to escape her fate and she is adopted by none other than Potiphar who marries her off to Joseph. (She is the woman in the background in Rembrandt's painting of Jacob blessing Joseph's sons)

## 2. MIDRASH

תלמוד בבלי מועד קטן דף כז ע"ב

ואמר רב יהודה אמר רב: כל המתקשה על מתו יותר מדאי - על מת אחר הוא בוכה. ההיא איתתא דהות בשיבבותיה דרב הונא, הוו לה שבעה בני. מת חד מינייהו, הוות קא בכיא ביתירתא עליה. שלח לה רב הונא: לא תעבדי הכי! לא אשגחה ביה. שלח לה: אי צייתת - מוטב, ואי לא - צבית זודתא לאידך מית. ומיתו כולהו. לסוף אמר לה: תימוש זודתא לנפשיך, ומיתא. 'אל תבכו למת ואל תנדו לו', אל תבכו למת - יותר מדאי ואל תנדו לו - יותר מכשיעור. הא כיצד? שלשה ימים - לבכי, ושבעה - להספד, ושלשים - לגיהוץ ולתספורת. מכאן ואילך - אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: אי אתם רחמנים בו יותר ממני.

*R. Yehudah said, citing Rav: Whoever indulges in grief to excess, over his dead, will weep for another. There was a certain woman that lived in the neighbourhood of R. Huna; she had seven sons one of whom died [and] she wept for him rather excessively. R. Huna sent [word] to her: 'Act not thus'. She heeded him not [and] he sent to her: 'Act not thus'. She heeded him not [and] he sent to her: 'If you heed my words it is well; but if not, are you anxious to make provision for yet another?' He [the next son] died and they all died. In the end he said to her, 'Are you fumbling with provision for yourself?' And she died. [Our Rabbis taught]: 'Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him' (Jer. 22:10). 'Weep not for the dead' – [that is] in excess, 'neither bemoan him' – beyond measure. How is that [applied]? Three days for weeping and seven for lamenting and thirty [to refrain] from cutting the hair and [donning] fresh clothes; hereafter, the Holy One, blessed be He, says 'Ye are not more compassionate towards him than I'.*

This is an extremely harsh sugya. (we learn the laws of aveilus from here). It seems to say that a parent who grieves more than thirty days will be punished with the death of another child. A possible reason is that contemplating something so horrific and senseless as the death of a child will lead one to question God's ways, or at least behave in a manner that appears to be more compassionate than God Himself.

It seems she never got over the loss which impaired her ability to raise the remaining children prompting the harsh retort by the Rav Huna. In any case, the story within this sugya tells of a woman who cried for her dead child, and Rav Huna her neighbour berated her very harshly. She did not follow his advice,

though, and died of sorrow after burying all of her seven children. A strikingly parallel story is found in BT Sanhedrin, playing off a verse in **Lamentations**:

תלמוד בבלי סנהדרין דף קד ע"ב

'בכה תבכה בלילה', שתי בכיות הללו למה?... דבר אחר: בלילה - שכל הבוכה בלילה קולו נשמע. דבר אחר: בלילה שכל הבוכה בלילה כוכבים ומזלות בוכין עמו. דבר אחר: בלילה - שכל הבוכה בלילה השומע קולו בוכה כנגדו. מעשה באשה אחת שכנתו של רבן גמליאל שמת בנה, והיתה בוכה עליו בלילה, שמע רבן גמליאל קולה ובכה כנגדה, עד שנשרו ריסי עיניו. למחר הכירו בו תלמידיו והוציאוה משכונתו.

*'She weepeth, yea, She weepeth in the night'. Why this double weeping? ... Another interpretation of 'in the night': whoever weeps at night, his voice is heard.*

*Another meaning: whoever weeps at night, the stars and constellations weep with him. Another meaning: whoever weeps at night, he who hears him weeps. It happened to a woman, a neighbour of Rabban Gamliel, that her son died, and she was weeping for him at night. R. Gamliel heard her voice and cried with her until his eyelashes fell out. The next day, his disciples saw this and removed her from his neighbourhood.*

Here again we find a bereaved mother in the neighbourhood of a great rabbi - Rabban Gamliel. She too cries, and the rabbi hears her grief. This time, however, the rabbi responds in a completely different way - he cries **with** her, sharing her grief. Interestingly, there are two versions regarding this sharing. One is that he actually identified with her pain. The other, found in **Eichah Rabbah (the printed edition) is that her crying reminded Rabban Gamliel of the destruction of the Temple.** While creating some distance between the rabbi and the mother, this version still preserves his sensitivity, which moved him to remember a pain that he felt himself. However, this neighbourly support was not allowed to persist, and Rabban Gamliel's disciples evicted the mother from the area. Her grief, interestingly in the midrash stimulates his grief by association with memory of Churban. {Rabbi Gamliel's philosophy was: **Whoever has mercy on other people, Heaven will have mercy upon him; whoever does not have mercy on other people, Heaven will not have mercy upon him** (Shabbos 151b). At his son's wedding, Rabbi Gamliel stood over his guests and served them wine despite the fact that he was the *Nasi* (Kiddushin 32b).} This triggering of grief is well known to the modern mind, as psychologists tell us about memory trauma and grief both conscious and unconscious.

I am intrigued by the three versions of the story two in the talmud and one in Eichah Rabbah.

In all three excessive grief is seen to be unhealthy, even mortal. In only the midrashic version (the oldest) is the grief a trigger to the Rabbi's own sense of grief and traumatic memory. The woman is removed because she is the impediment to the Rabbi's functioning! The Churban is now encoded as so paradigmatic of trauma that even a weeping mother for the loss of her own child can evoke memories of the catastrophe in the mind of the nasi.

### 3. MODERN MIDRASH

Marc Chagall's "Solitude" (1933), while a well-known painting, is at first glance not immediately compelling. The three main figures are stiffly arranged; a seated rabbi, a sweet faced cow to the right and a diminutive white angel above them both. There is an odd atmosphere of melancholy mitigated by the funny cow. At first glance, the solitude experienced by the rabbi holding the red Torah is the only obvious narrative element.



**Solitude (1933) oil on canvas by Marc Chagall - Courtesy Tel Aviv Museum of Art.<sup>5</sup>**

Scholar Mira Friedman maintains that this figure is from Jeremiah, referring to *Lamentations* 1:1; "Alas, the city sits solitary." Additionally, she sees the cow as referring to the **Midrash in Eichah Rabbah 1:51** relating that when a certain cow bellowed, it signaled the destruction of the Temple and when it bellowed again, it heralded the birth of the Messiah whose name was "Comforter." **Which bovine "note" are we hearing?**

Chagall produced this painting at an auspicious period in his life and work. He had begun working on a monumental project in 1931; a series of etchings promoted by the famous publisher Ambrose Vollard simply called "The Bible." Increasingly consumed by the biblical narratives, he had just returned from a

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tour of Palestine, inspired by the vibrant new settlements and the young, Jewish artist's community. But deeply troubling events loomed on the horizon; the Nazi rise to power in Germany threatened Jews everywhere and immediately resulted in his paintings being publicly burned in Mannheim, Germany.

Now the diverse elements begin to come together. The cow operates as both herald of doom and of hope – one symbol that carries two meanings. The violin-playing cow, in yet another aspect – also seen in a drawing in Bella Chagall's "*Burning Lights*" – figures **as a representation of Tisha b'Av**. On this day of mourning, art (music) and hope are silenced along with the comfort of the Torah itself, as the world smolders under dark, foreboding clouds. The small white angel unsuccessfully attempts to flee what we now know will become a Holocaust. Chagall and his family would be safe in Paris and then in the south of France, until he fled to the United States in June 1941. The symbolic world he depicted in "*Solitude*" was tragically not so fortunate. Chagall's work is deeply personal, even as he reacts passionately to the world around him. It is all in the details. Chagall sees the impending Churban before it happens and reflects upon it in his later works.

## 4. Holocaust and Post Modernity

Tisha B'Av -- the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, the most infamous day on the Hebrew calendar. As the Sages taught:

On the ninth of Av it was decreed that our fathers should not enter the [Promised] Land, the First and Second Temple was destroyed, Beitar was captured and the City [Jerusalem] was ploughed up.<sup>6</sup>

On Tisha B'Av in the year 1290, Edward I issued an edict of expulsion for the Jews from England.

Tisha B'Av, 1492, is also the day of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

On Tisha B'Av 1942, the first Jews of Warsaw were gassed in Treblinka.

Elie Weisel, in his book *Night*, speaks of his father's thirst. Mr. Wiesel's father begged him to get him some water to quench his thirst as he lay dying in the barracks of concentration camp. But Wiesel could not do so for fear of severe retribution from the guards. By morning, his father was dead. He lived with this fact, this grief, this powerlessness. In his writings he lays out for the sake of memory, and the work of grieving, portraits of family members separated forever from each other, brutal beatings and the smell of burning flesh, starvation and deprivation--as well as the deep interior suffering of the oppressed, tortured both by hope and despair, living in a nocturnal world that rotates between the unbelief of denial and the harsh despairing cruelty of reality. In more concrete terms, sons are torn from their mothers who are being sent off to their deaths, families are violently arrested from their homes, friends and neighbors are burned

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<sup>6</sup> Mishnah Taanis 4:6

in incinerators, babies are tossed into the air to be used as target practice, skeletal men ravage and murder each other for crumbs of bread, and corpses are piled upon the living, smothering them with decay, corruption, and the imminence of death. Eli Wiesel, fifteen years old, sees everything, experiencing the stark despair of his own degradation.

Wiesel considers his young faith in God fanatical, a daily excursion into the Talmud, longing to venture into the mysticism of the cabbala. At one point, his master at the Hasidic synagogue, "Moshe the Beadle," explained to him that "every question possessed a power that did not lie in the answer...Man raises himself toward God by the questions he asks Him...that is the true dialogue. Man questions God and God answers. But we don't understand his answers. We can't understand them. Because they come from the depths of the soul, and they stay there until death...I pray to the God within me that He will give me the strength to ask Him the right questions."

## **5. Internalizing the Archetypes: Remez**

*I am ill because of wounds to the soul,  
to the deep emotional self  
and the wounds to the soul take a long, long time,  
only time can help  
and patience, and a certain difficult repentance  
long, difficult repentance, realization of life's mistake,  
and the freeing oneself  
from the endless repetition of the mistake  
which mankind at large has chosen to sanctify.*

"Healing" D.H. Lawrence

One of the key elements to penitence or *teshuva* is surrender. This act might be seen by some as an act of defeat but for those who have experienced grief it is the only survival tool. Furthermore surrender to God is not a one-time event. It is an on-going, multilevel process of letting go of the things that block us from God. First we must let go of those behaviours that continuously disconnect us from God. Then, one after another, our inner work forces us relentlessly to surrender virtually all of the things we've come to rely on in life: our sense of power and control, our (distorted) view of God, our idealized image of ourselves, and finally, the character traits we depended on to protect us and to advance our agenda. Without this "long, difficult repentance," in D.H. Lawrence's words, we will continue to repeat the mistakes that have brought us so much pain. Nothing changes if nothing changes.

The difficulty, of course, is that we have reasons why we developed all these behaviors, and we have feelings about letting them go. Think of work! and our inappropriate relationship to work and money. The very thought of letting it go fills us with terror and rage. In our inner work we realize and we've discovered that our problem is not primarily overwork, over food, or rage. Our problem is us. For even after the active behaviours are gone, we discover that our lives are ruled by resentment, fear, dishonesty and selfishness. We simply don't know how to live lives characterized by honesty and love and especially intimacy. We grieve that most.

These "defects of character" may have helped us survive in childhood, but they wreak havoc in our adult lives and relationships. Hiding from family conflict may have made perfect sense when we were four. But that behavior will almost certainly defeat our efforts to build a stable marriage when we're forty.

Surrendering these character defects leaves us feeling naked and vulnerable. We're flooded with fear and a sense of impending loss. The inner work we must do here is very similar to the **grief work that confronts us when we lose a loved one**. We must embrace all our feelings of fear and loss, and begin to fashion a new life without one of the old familiar pieces we relied on. To make it even tougher, our inner work demands we surrender significant parts of who we are without knowing if we'll be happy about the transaction on the other side. We have to move forward by faith. Emunah that most elusive gifts that evoke intimacy as Reb Shlomo mentioned. It is important to stress that without surrender one might view all the above as ego-centered self-improvement techniques. But nothing is farther from the truth. The act of surrender changes all that by placing God in the center. I would like to suggest that grief and surrender are the two poles along which we string out our coping mechanisms and survival techniques. That on the national level the Midrash has already engaged in communal soul-searching running according to the lines of the five poems in Lamentations, and the Talmud follows suit in its multi-layered approach to the same set of grief circumstances, the example of a mother burying her son. Here we internalize those projections and attempt to work through the grief in the same way. The grieving process including the act of surrender to the powerful forces of nature history and God all help to focus on our defects and the need for internal tikkun and inner work.

In a modern moral mussar book Reb Zilberstein<sup>7</sup> the same moral tale is made use of for purposes of instruction and moralizing as to divine providence. I recount this tale precisely because it falls into classic midrashic motifs of *mashal* or *maaseh*. This story was apparently a true one and illustrates the internalizing process of character assets and inspirational Providence. I do like its symmetry and the theological underpinnings of textual correctness intersecting with theology.

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<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstien "*Tuvicho Yabiu*, Vol II, Parshas Eikev Eikev p.266-267

There was a Torah Scholar who needed a certain rare book that was not commonly found in most synagogues. Consequently, he went to a library in Jerusalem. He brought a sandwich and washed and bentedched- said Grace After Meals with great fervor out loud. Afterwards, the librarian, who wasn't religious, came over to him and pointed out that he had made a mistake in his recitation of the Grace. In the third blessing, we say ..."*shelo nevosh vlo nicolem*...- so that we may not be shamed nor humiliated..." but you added some words, "*Vlo nicosheil*-we shall not stumble," which are not written in the siddur. She explained, that even though she was not religious now, she used to be very religious, and she remembers that this was not part of the Grace.<sup>8</sup>

The young man, who was used to saying this version from when he was a little child, looked through all the prayer books that he could find in the library. None of them had his version. However, he promised the librarian that he would send her a copy from a siddur or other sefer that had the relevant version. After many hours of searching in different synagogues, he finally found an old siddur where, in the Haggadah of Pesach, it said this version. He immediately copied that page and highlighted the relevant words in red. He also circled the words with red arrows so that she wouldn't miss it. He sent it to the library, but since he didn't know the woman's name, he requested the library to give it over to the librarian who was working in this certain room on this particular day and time. After he accomplished his mission, he forgot about the whole episode, and put it out of his mind.

After many months, he receives a beautiful wedding invitation, but to his astonishment he realizes that he doesn't know the groom or the bride.

As Providence would have it, on the night of the wedding, he happened to pass by the wedding hall where this wedding was taking place. He decided that he may as well pop in and see maybe he does know somebody there. His astonishment was reconfirmed as he didn't recognize anybody there. He assumed it was a mistake and he was on his way out.

At that very moment, someone asked him his name. When he identified himself, he was told that the bride was interested in having a few words with him. Now he was really puzzled. What connection did he have with the bride?

"Don't you recognize me,?" said the bride to the baffled young man, who responded in the negative.

"Well, I'm none other than that librarian who had the discussion with you about the Grace After Meals," she said with great feeling. "You should know," she said with great emotion, "that you are the most important guest at this wedding. It's only in your merit and the letter that you sent me that I repented and married a repentant Jew who learns Torah all day." She then went on to describe the amazing chain of events that brought about such an upheaval in her life.

"Unfortunately, at the time when you came to the library, I was going out with a Gentile. We were thinking of marriage, but, despite the fact that I wasn't religious, I was still wary about marrying out of Faith. He finally sent me a letter with an ultimatum. If I did not give a final response by a certain day and hour, then there would be nothing more to talk about.

When that day came, I was going insane with my dilemma, not knowing what to do. I arrived at the library in a daze and entered my room, and saw your letter on the table. I found out later, that by chance, the letter had traveled around from room to room for many weeks and didn't reach its destination until that fateful day.

I open it up and see two words surrounded by red arrows highlighted in red.

**'Velo Nicosheil-we shall not stumble.'**

I started to scream in a voice not my own, 'How were you ready to almost stumble in such a severe sin?! You are a Jewish Girl.!'

At that very moment, all my doubts were resolved once and for all. I knew that it was forbidden for me to stumble.

I notified the Gentile of my severing the relationship.

One mitzvah leads to another and, not too long afterward, I repented completely and am marrying a repentant Jew, and we will build a true Jewish home together."

I believe this story reveals that act of surrender quite vividly. The words surrounded by red arrows highlighted in red were as much a trigger as the content of those words. In the red arrows and highlights

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<sup>8</sup> (If it sounds familiar, it is recited in Nusach Sefard in the Shacharis-Morning Prayer, by the berocho-blessing "*Ahavah Rabbah-Ahava Olom*" which is recited right before "*Krias Shema*.")

the mythic power of language reached a place within her despite her past. Beyond the coloring of the red circle the very words imply success. Not stumbling is asking for success. This is omitted from the classical siddur where we merely ask for the removal of shame and humiliation. The rest we leave to God. The outcome we leave to Him. It is an act of surrender whereas adding *vlo nicolem* implies we also wish to determine the outcome. The difference between texts and the dialogue of librarian and Torah student becomes the difference theologically between approaches to the divine as well as textual traditions.

*But for me Tisha B'av is too much  
too much grief  
too much us attempting to accept blame  
too much trying to still control God's rage by yet another act of contrition and self-  
mortification  
too much communal sorrow  
too much pictures of holocaust victims  
too much associations with grief and personal failure.  
where ritualized focus on the laws and customs governing the day and the rules  
surrounding it all deflect from the grieving work that needs to be done.*

## **6. Projecting the archetypes onto the Divine: Sod**

*A story of the famed Chassidic Rabbi, Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov, who came into the synagogue on Tisha B'Av only to see his Chassidim sitting on the floor and instead of mourning and saying Lamentations, were joking and schmoozing with one another. Levi Yitzchak looked up to heaven and intoned a prayer: "Master of the Universe, if your children do not observe this holiday of yours properly, take it from them!"*

We too say that enough is enough; we admit that we can not properly observe Tisha B'Av. We must beseech the Master of the World to take it away and give us the Temple of intimacy. Let us see and feel what it is and what it does. We can not mourn for what we never knew. We must ask G-d to give it back to us. Two thousand year is enough punishment! we need intimacy back.

We pray that the Schechina does get restored to Her glory and becomes re-united with the Divine Source.

We pray that this year we will know no further suffering and all men will finally awaken to the real battle within.