**CJC, “Moving On and Up: through the Lens of the Covid Pandemic”**

Rabbi Ilyse S. Kramer (ilysesk@gmail.com) Tuesday, May 18, 2022

**Session #1**

**Text Selections #1: Mourning and Moving On… Great! But, is it *too* Fast?**

In the late first century C.E., the Rabbis, quoting biblical verses, maintain that other modes of worshipping God can fulfill the place of animal sacrifices and are even superior to them:

Rabbi Elazar said: Doing righteous deeds of charity is greater than offering all of the sacrifices, as it is written, "Doing charity and justice is more desirable to Adonai than sacrifice" (Proverbs 21:3).

Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai once was walking with his student, Rabbi Joshua, near Jerusalem after the destruction of the Temple. Rabbi Joshua looked at the Temple ruins and said: "Alas for us! The place that atoned for the sins of the people Israel through the ritual of animal sacrifice lies in ruins!" Then Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai spoke to him in these words of comfort: "Be not grieved, my son. There is another equally meritorious way of gaining atonement even though the Temple is destroyed. We can still gain atonement through deeds of loving kindness, for it is written, 'Loving kindness I desire, not sacrifice' (Hosea 6:6)." *(Avot D'Rabbi Natan 4:5)*

**Text Selections #2: The Stages of Redemption: “First, only a flicker of light… that grows…”**

*Rabbi Chiya the Great and Rabbi Shimon the son of Chalafta were walking in the Arbel valley at dawn when they saw the glimmering of the early morning star. Rabbi Chiya said to Rabbi Shimon, ‘my esteemed colleague, this [early morning light] is just like the redemption of Israel: in the beginning it will be little by little, yet, as it progresses, it will grow brighter and brighter. And why is it this way? Because the prophet said, ‘When I sit in darkness, God is a light for me.’ (*[*Micah 7:8*](https://www.sefaria.org/Micah.7.8?lang=he-en&utm_source=ou.org&utm_medium=sefaria_linker)*)  Jerusalem Talmud, Brachot 1:1*

*(“The Messianic Redemption) does not result from one sudden, violent act of supernatural upheaval; redemption is a natural, progressive process which develops gradually and is like the daily growth of a plant.”*(Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer, ArtScroll, *Shemoneh Esrei*, pp. 214.)

In his commentary on the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabbi Moshe Margoleis wrote that:

*“When the Talmud quotes Micah, it is telling us that the nature of exile is darkness, and the nature of redemption is light. Just like the morning light appears little by little and slowly gets brighter and brighter, the same is true with the light-like redemption of Israel. As the Talmud goes on to explain, this progressive process is similar to what happened in the days of Mordecai and Esther.”*(*P’nei Moshe*, Jerusalem Talmud, *[Brachot](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berakhot.1.1?lang=he-en&utm_source=ou.org&utm_medium=sefaria_linker)*[1:1](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berakhot.1.1?lang=he-en&utm_source=ou.org&utm_medium=sefaria_linker))

**Text Selections #3: Not to Mourn is not OK…But, Too Much Mourning?**

**Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 60b**

After the Second Temple was destroyed, ascetics multiplied in Israel. They did not eat meat or drink wine . . . Rabbi Joshua told them: “Not to mourn at all is impossible, for it has been decreed. But to mourn too much is also impossible.”

§ Having mentioned the prohibition against plastering, which is a sign of mourning over the destruction of the Temple, the Gemara discusses related matters. **The Sages taught** in a *baraita* (*Tosefta*, *Sota* 15:11): **When the Temple was destroyed a second** time, there was **an increase** in the number of **ascetics among** the **Jews,** whose practice was **to not eat meat and to not drink wine. Rabbi Yehoshua joined them** to discuss their practice. **He said to them: My children, for what** reason do **you not eat meat and** do **you not drink wine? They said to him: Shall we eat meat, from which** offerings **are sacrificed upon** the **altar, and now** the altar **has ceased** to exist? **Shall we drink wine, which is poured** as a libation **upon the altar, and now** the altar **has ceased** to exist?

אָמַר לָהֶם אִם כֵּן לֶחֶם לֹא נֹאכַל שֶׁכְּבָר בָּטְלוּ מְנָחוֹת אֶפְשָׁר בְּפֵירוֹת פֵּירוֹת לֹא נֹאכַל שֶׁכְּבָר בָּטְלוּ בִּכּוּרִים אֶפְשָׁר בְּפֵירוֹת אֲחֵרִים מַיִם לֹא נִשְׁתֶּה שֶׁכְּבָר בָּטֵל נִיסּוּךְ הַמַּיִם שָׁתְקוּ

Rabbi Yehoshua **said to them: If so, we will not eat bread** either, **since** the **meal-offerings** that were offered upon the altar **have ceased.** They replied: You are correct. It is **possible** to subsist **with produce.** He said to them: **We will not eat produce** either, **since** the bringing of **the first fruits have ceased.** They replied: You are correct. We will no longer eat the produce of the seven species from which the first fruits were brought, as it is **possible** to subsist **with other produce.** He said to them: If so, **we will not drink water, since the water libation has ceased. They were silent,** as they realized that they could not survive without water.

אָמַר לָהֶן בָּנַי בּוֹאוּ וְאוֹמַר לָכֶם שֶׁלֹּא לְהִתְאַבֵּל כׇּל עִיקָּר אִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁכְּבָר נִגְזְרָה גְּזֵרָה וּלְהִתְאַבֵּל יוֹתֵר מִדַּאי אִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁאֵין גּוֹזְרִין גְּזֵירָה עַל הַצִּבּוּר אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן רוֹב צִבּוּר יְכוֹלִין לַעֲמוֹד בָּהּ דִּכְתִיב בַּמְּאֵרָה אַתֶּם נֵאָרִים וְאֹתִי אַתֶּם קֹבְעִים הַגּוֹי כֻּלּוֹ

Rabbi Yehoshua **said to them: My children, come, and I will tell you** how we should act. **To not mourn at all** is **impossible, as** the **decree was already issued** and the Temple has been destroyed. **But to mourn excessively** as you are doing is also **impossible, as** the Sages **do not issue a decree upon the public unless a majority of the public is able to abide by it, as it is written: “You are cursed with the curse, yet you rob Me, even this whole nation”** (Malachi 3:9), indicating that the prophet rebukes the people for neglecting observances only if they were accepted by the whole nation.

אֶלָּא כָּךְ אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים סָד אָדָם אֶת בֵּיתוֹ בְּסִיד וּמְשַׁיֵּיר בּוֹ דָּבָר מוּעָט וְכַמָּה אָמַר רַב יוֹסֵף אַמָּה עַל אַמָּה אָמַר רַב חִסְדָּא כְּנֶגֶד הַפֶּתַח

Rabbi Yehoshua continues: **Rather, this** is what **the Sages said: A person** may **plaster his house with plaster, but** he must **leave** over **a small amount in it** without plaster to remember the destruction of the Temple. The Gemara interjects: **And how much** is a small amount? **Rav Yosef said:** One **cubit by** one **cubit. Rav Ḥisda said:** This should be **opposite the entrance,** so that it is visible to all.

עוֹשֶׂה אָדָם כׇּל צׇרְכֵי סְעוּדָה וּמְשַׁיֵּיר דָּבָר מוּעָט מַאי הִיא אָמַר רַב פָּפָּא כָּסָא דְהַרְסָנָא Rabbi Yehoshua continues: The Sages said that **a person** may **prepare all** that he **needs for a meal, but** he must **leave** out **a small item** to remember the destruction of the Temple. The Gemara interjects: **What** is **this** small item? **Rav Pappa said:** Something akin to **small, fried fish.**

עוֹשָׂה אִשָּׁה כׇּל תַּכְשִׁיטֶיהָ וּמְשַׁיֶּירֶת דָּבָר מוּעָט מַאי הִיא אָמַר רַב בַּת צִדְעָא שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אִם אֶשְׁכָּחֵךְ יְרוּשָׁלִָם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי תִּדְבַּק לְשׁוֹנִי לְחִכִּי וְגוֹ׳ Rabbi Yehoshua continues: The Sages said that **a woman** may **engage** in **all** of **her cosmetic treatments, but** she must **leave** out **a small matter** to remember the destruction of the Temple. The Gemara interjects: **What** is **this** small matter? **Rav said:** She does not remove hair from the place on the **temple** from which women would remove hair. The source for these practices is a verse, **as it is stated: “If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,** if I remember you not; if I set not Jerusalem above my highest joy” (Psalms 137:5–6).

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**Session #1, Reflection I: The Journey of Moving on… and Upward**

Exercise: “At First, I thought… and, Then… and, Then… and Then… and, Then… and, Then… and, Then… Until, …

**Session #2, Reflection II: Where are we in relation to the Mountain (Sinai)**

 ***Ayecha? Hineni!***

* Where have we been?
* Where are we going?
* What have we learned along the way?

**Session #3, Reflection III: Making the Journey Up the Mountain A Meditation**