

## The Power of a Community to Diminish Suffering in the World

**Liora Eilon – Kfar Aza**

*Cry, she will cry at night.* (Lamentations 1:2)

**At night. For all who cry at night, one who hears their voice, cries along with them.**

(Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 104b).

*Cry, she will* [תִּבְרָךְ] *cry* – this is none other than a command: Cry, you will cry [תִּבְרָךְ]! One must cry at the sorrow of one's neighbor, whose son or daughter has died. For thus he takes away a little of their sorrow and puts himself a little in their place.

*At night* – for in the daytime their neighbor see their grief and may cry with them. At nighttime, people are left alone with their grief, and this is why it is written, *Cry, she will cry*, that their neighbor cry with them at night, and as the weeping and sorrow are shared, they are diminished a little in the world.

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**There was a woman who was Rabban Gamliel's neighbor, whose son died and she would cry for him at night. Rabban Gamliel heard her voice and cried along with her until his eyelashes fell out. The next day his students took note and removed her from his neighborhood.**

(Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 104b)

But Rabban Gamliel was fulfilling what was written, *cry, she will cry at night*, so why did they remove her from his neighborhood? His students said, because his eyelashes fell out – and it was because he was crying alone. His neighbors did not hear him crying, and did not cry along with him for that neighbor who lost her child, that is why we removed her from the neighborhood.

Because she, in their eyes, was like Abraham Our Father, of whom it is said:

“What was Abraham Our Father like? Like an amphora of persimmon fragrance, sealed shut by a tight cord, laid aside in a corner, whose scent does not carry. But when it is stirred, its scent diffuses. Thus, the Holy Blessed One said to Abraham Our Father: Move yourself from place to place and your name will grow great in the world, *Go you* (Gen. 12:1).”

The students sought to remove her out of her neighborhood, that she would stir about in the world, going from one neighborhood to another, crying for her son, and her voice would be like a Shofar that sounds from one end of the earth to another, calling out: *Cry*,

you will *cry in the night*, for you are the Community of Israel. And so, Rabban Gamliel will not cry alone for her in the night, but the people of his community and all the communities, will cry along with them, and through, the sorrow will diminish a little in the world.

And since she stirred about in their neighborhoods, the people cried along with her and their tears cleansed their souls. And so, her mind eased a little and she found some respite for her soul.

## Notes

**What was Abraham Our Father Like** – Midrash Breishit Rabbah 39:2

## Midrashim of Destruction

### Nurit Hirschfeld-Skupinsky – Nachal Oz

When the home was destroyed, when our world, on October 7, was destroyed, it seemed to us as though the stories of The Destruction emerged from out of letters, two thousand years old. The words were made flesh, becoming a grieving, anguished, despondent reality, and the things, they are hard even to utter, and the mouth cannot articulate them.

The story of Miriam bat Tanchum, who was taken captive along with her seven sons. Caesar took them and put them in seven different rooms.

He brought out the first and said to him: Bow down to the idol. He replied: God forbid! I do not bow to the idol. He said to him: Why? “Because thus it is written in our Torah *I am God your Lord* (Exodus 20:2).” He took him out and killed him straightaway.

...

He brought out the seventh, and he was the youngest of them all. He said to him: “My son, bow down to the idol.” He replied: God forbid!...

He immediately commanded that he be killed. His mother fell upon him, hugging and kissing him, and she said to him: “My son, go to Abraham the father of all of you, and tell him, so says my mother – don’t be too full of yourself, and say, I built an altar, I laid on it my son Isaac, for our mother built seven altars, and laid seven sons on them, in one day. You, the trial; and I, the act.” While she was kissing and hugging him, Caesar gave the order and they killed him before her.

... With time that woman lost her mind, and fell from the roof and died, fulfilling what was written *She who bore seven was wretched* (Jer. 15:9). And a *bat kol* (literally, a divine voice) called out, saying *The mother of sons is rejoicing* (Ps. 113:9). And the Holy Spirit cried out, saying *For these do I weep* (Lam. 1:16)

(Midrash Eikhah Rabbah 1:50)

When The Home [The Temple] was destroyed, the seven sons of Miriam bat Tanchum were murdered before her eyes, for they refused to bow down to the idol. When they came to kill her last child, Miriam bat Tanchum asked of her youngest son: “My son, go to Abraham the father of all of you, and tell him, so says my mother – don’t be too full of yourself, and say, I built an altar, I laid on it my son Isaac; for our mother built seven altars, and laid seven sons on them, in one day. You, the trial; and I, the act.”

When our world was destroyed on October 7, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, stood facing burnt, wrecked homes of whole families that were no more. With shocked, silent gaze, as though turning to the men of status and authority, entrusted with the security, and future, of the nation, screaming in horror: “Where were you?! We, the act, and you failed the trial.”

Miriam bat Tanchum knew that her children chose death, so that they would not commit a *yehareg ve’bal ya’avov* [a sin which one should rather die than do], and her end was that she lost her mind, fell from the roof and died. And the Holy Spirit cried out, saying *For these do I weep* (Lam. 1:16). Yet these family members, what will become of them, who have not even that meager comfort? What will the Holy Spirit cry out for the women and men of the Gaza Envelope, whose families were erased in one day?

## Sleeps and Slumbers, The Guardian of Israel

**Rivkah Lubitch**

*A Song of Ascents*

*I will raise my eyes to the mountains*

*From whence will my help come?*

*My help is from God*

*Maker of Heaven and Earth.*

*He will not let your foot slip*

*Your guardian will not slumber.*

*Here, He neither sleeps nor slumbers,  
The Guardian of Israel.*

*God guards you; God shades you at  
your right hand.*

*By day, the sun will not strike at you,  
nor the moon by night.*

*God will guard you from all harm; He  
will guard your life.*

*God will guard your going and coming  
From now and forever.*

**(Psalm 121)**

A song of Descents

I raised my eyes to the mountains

and my help did not come.

I have no help from God

Maker of Heaven and Earth.

He let my foot slip,

He let my guardians slumber.

Here, He slept and slumbered, the  
Guardian of Israel.

God did not guard me; He did not shade  
me at my right hand.

By day, the sun struck at the moon and  
me by night.

God did not guard me from all harm; He  
did not guard my life.

How will God guard my going and  
coming

From now and forever?

## Midrash One Nation to Another / Rabbi Yael Vurgan

Yael said: All my days, I grieved over this verse:

*And God said to her, two nations are in your belly, and two peoples will go their separate ways from your bowels, **and one people another will overpower, and the elder will serve the younger.** (Genesis 25, 23)*

And I asked: How did Rebecca hear this harsh prophecy while Isaiah heard: *no nation will take up a sword against another* (Isaiah 2,4)?

And Abraham had already said to Lot: *Let there not be conflict between me and you...for we are brethren.* (Genesis 13, 8)

And if you will say 'all brothers hate one another,' haven't we found that in every generation, after they hated, they came together and reconciled with one another?

Of the sons of Abraham, it is said: *And they buried him, Isaac and Ishmael, his sons* (Genesis 25, 9)

And of the sons of Isaac, it is said: *And Esau ran towards him and hugged him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept* (Genesis 33, 4).

And of the sons of Jacob, it is said: *And now, be not sad, or angry with yourselves over having sold me, because it was to preserve life that God sent me here before you.* (Genesis 45, 5)

Until there came a generation that hated no more. And who are these? Moses and Aaron, of whom it is said: *How good and pleasing it is when siblings dwell together* (Psalms 133. 1).

And I heard most of the people and the leaders saying: we will live by the sword forever, and I grieved and wept even more, that they prefer that bad prophecy that Rebecca heard over the good one.

Until a poem came into my hands:

"And I shall keep faith in the future,  
Though the day be yet far away  
Surely it will come - when nations  
Will share blessing and peace."

I rejoiced with great joy that Tchernikhovsky had come and turned the first prophecy upside down, and made it like the second, better one. And I too, chose to believe in it, with all my heart and all my might.

And I would go about in the city and call out: The two nations can, they can, live on this land in peace, share its blessings and be a blessing to one another!

## NOTES

**All brothers hate one another** - Midrash Tanhuma Exodus 27: *Who will make you like a brother to me* (Cant. 8:1) one finds that all brothers hate one another. Cain hates Abel...Ishmael hates Isaac....Esau hates Jacob...the Tribes all hated Joseph...and so of what brother was Israel [in Cant. 8:1] speaking of to God? Like *Moses and Aaron*, as is written *How good and pleasing it is when siblings dwell together* (Psalms 133:1). **I will believe** - Shaul Tchernikhovsky, "I Believe" in *Hezyonut u-Manginot* [Visions and Melodies], Odessa, 1892.